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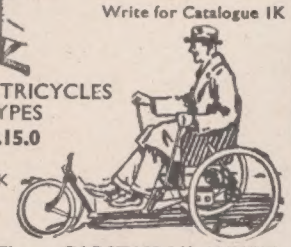

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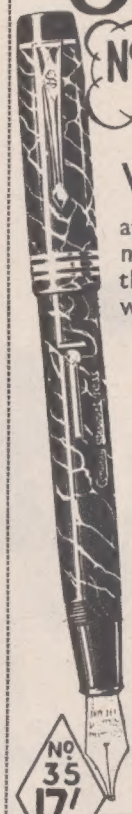

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P 244a

He was the centre of that humble room. They looked to him to do something for the child.

Baptism of the BAG

Dr. Finlay Hyslop.

Beginning a series of short stories by

Dr. A. J. Cronin

author of "The Stars Look Down," in which he describes the adventures of young Doctor Finlay Hyslop, who enters his new profession as assistant to the peppery old general practitioner, Doctor Cameron. There's laughter and tears in "The Adventures of a Little Black Bag."

HE stood under the arches of Levenford Station that wet September afternoon wondering if he should take a cab. Economy denied the cab, dignity demanded it—not his own dignity—the almost terrifying dignity of his new profession.

At length he beckoned to the red-face jarvey in the long green coat, who, from beside the one fly-blown four-wheeler that graced the station exit, had been considering him for the last three minutes with a stealthy, speculative eye.

"How much to Arden House? Dr. Cameron's place, you know."

Auld Tam cautiously came over. None of your southern alacrity, none of that "Cab, sir!" nonsense about Tam. He knew his worth, did auld Tam Dewar, and never sold himself for less.

"How much luggage have ye got?" he parried, though the luggage was plainly seen—one portmanteau upon the pavement and a small black gladstone bag, a very new bag which the young fellow kept tightly gripped in his big hand. Then he added: "You'll be Cameron's new assistant, I'm thinkin'?"

"Just so!"

"Twa shillings to you, then—doctor."

He threw a cunning emphasis upon the title, which fell intoxicatingly on newly-qualified ears. But for all that Finlay kept his head and said sternly:

"I mean the short cut"—he, who had never been in Levenford before—"not the long way you proposed to wander round with me!"

"As Goad's my Maker——" protested Tam.

A lively argument ensued, at the end of which a compromise—one shilling and "the price of a pint"—was effected with expressions of goodwill on both sides.

The portmanteau was slung upon the roof, auld Tam climbed rheumily upon the box, and Finlay was rattled off over the greasy cobblestones of Station Road.

He was a big-boned, rather lanky lad with a shock of dark hair, high cheekboned, a decent longish nose, and a good stubborn chin. His blue eyes were level, queerly penetrating, yet for all their northern tenacity they had fun lurking in their depths.

His clothes, though new, and sober to the point of austerity, were heavy, countrified in cut, and sadly ill-fitting. They stressed the rawness of the lad, intensified his gawkiness. Not that Finlay minded—the garments covered him warmly, did they not?—and the principle of use rather than adornment was one on which he had been firmly reared.

His antecedents, indeed, were simple—simple as Scottish soil; yet, if they had that soil's simplicity they had its strength. His father, a tenant farmer outside Cupar, fighting a stern battle with unwilling land, had died when Finlay was a child; his mother, the daughter of a nearby country manse, left badly off, had yet used her slender resources to the utmost, struggling hard to give her only son his chance.

Finlay had taken that chance, though it meant work and effort to the limit of his powers; a desperate struggle for every bursary that lay open to him. But it had been worth it—worth it all a thousand times when he had won through—when only a week ago they had given him his degree.

Little enough, perhaps—the bare M.B. of a small Scots University. The cachet of a great London hospital would never be his, nor could he bracket the social distinction of Oxford or Cambridge behind his name. Yet he had been houseman in his day to Stockman, had worked under the great MacEwen, had seen those long, nervous fingers delicately probing the mysteries of the brain. The tradition of Lister was behind him.

He had no shame in his beginnings, but a dogged sort of pride. It had been a hard road; nor was it easy now. He was not stepping into a practice—purchased and ready made. No, no!

Stirrock, the Glasgow chemist, had said to him two days ago: "There's an assistantship in Levenford, if you're so mad to get started. Town and country stuff—not much. A hard nut, old Cameron, but a rare good chap at heart."

So here he was, hunched up in this mouldy provincial four-wheeler, an untried quantity, vested

(*continued on next page*)

Continuing BAPTISM *of the* BAG

mysteriously with the powers of life and death, a raw Scots youth who might one day be something—or who might not.

The cab clattered down Church Street, past the dismal free library, and turned into a quieter street of large detached houses. Halfway down it swung into the drive of Arden House, a soundly-built white stone dwelling with a coach-house at the side, and a semi-circular spread of lawn in front.

The rain dripped miserably as Finlay sprang up the front steps and rang the bell.

After a minute the door opened, and the housekeeper, a thin, elderly woman, dressed entirely in black confronted him.

Her hair was tightly drawn, her person spotless, and in her bleak face was stamped authority mingled with a certain grudging humanity; she had the look, indeed, of one tempted terribly to smile, who guards perpetually against a single sign of levity, lest it ruin her self-esteem irrevocably.

For a few seconds she inspected Finlay, his bag, his hat, even his boots; then, with a slight elevation of her brows, his luxurious background of horse and cab.

"Ye've a cab!" she observed severely, as though he had arrived in the state coach drawn by four cream horses. Pause. "Well! I suppose you'd better come in," she declared frigidly. "Don't forget to wipe your feet."

Finlay dutifully wiped his feet and "came in," feeling that he had made a bad beginning.

"The doctor's out," she announced. "He's fair run off his legs, poor man, since the last assistant left. Aah! He was no good, that one—no good ataal!" And with a faint inclination of her head she left him high and dry upon the hearth-rug.

Finlay grinned and looked round the big, comfortable room. The dining-room, he thought, observing the warm red curtains and red turkey carpet, the blazing coal fire and furniture of sound mahogany.

No aspidistra, thank God! A big bowl of apples on the dresser, and a full glass barrel of biscuits—whisky in the square-cut decanter—no pictures, no photographs, but, of all things, three yellow violins hanging on the walls.

A good—oh, a decent room to live in. He was warming himself pleasantly at the blaze when the door flung open, and Cameron came stamping in.

"That's right," said Cameron, without a handshake or a word of preamble. "Warm your backside at the fire while I work myself to death outside. Dammit to hell! I thought Stirrock said ye would be here this mornin'. Janet! Janet!" At the pitch of his lungs. "For God's sake bring in our tea."

He was a medium-sized, oldish man with a face beaten bright red by Scots weather and Scots whisky, and a pugnacious little grey imperial, now dewed with raindrops.

He stooped slightly, so that his head had a forward, belligerent thrust. He wore gaiters, cord breeches, and a big, baggy tweed jacket of a nondescript, vaguely greenish colour, the side pockets stuffed to bursting point with everything from an apple to a gum elastic catheter. About him there hung invariably the odour of drugs, carbolic, and strong tobacco.

Obtaining a good three-quarters of the fire, he inspected Finlay sideways, and asked abruptly:

"Are ye strong? Sound in wind and limb?"

"I hope so!"

"Married?"

"No!"

"Thank God! Can ye play the fiddle?"

"No!"

"Neither can I—but I can make them bonny. Do ye smoke a pipe?"

"I do!"

"Humph! Do ye drink whisky?"

Finlay's dander had been rising under this interrogation. I don't like you, he thought, as he looked at the odd, unprofessional figure beside him, and I never will. He answered surlily:

"I drink what I like, and when I like!"

The spark of a smile gleamed in Cameron's sardonic eye.

"It might be waur," he said, and then—"Sit in and have your tea."

Janet had swiftly and silently set the table—cake, bun, toast, preserve, brown bread, home-baked scones, cheese, and bannocks—and now she brought in a huge dish of cold ham and poached eggs with a big brown teapot.

"There's no falderals in this house," Cameron explained briefly as he poured the tea—he had beautiful hands, Finlay noticed, hard-skinned, yet supple and small as a woman's. "Breakfast, middle-day dinner, high tea, and supper—plain food and plenty. We work our assistants here, but—by your leave—we don't starve them."

They were well through the meal when Janet came in with more hot water. Only then did she say impassively:

"There's a man been waiting this last half-hour—young Lachlan Mackenzie—him that has the steading up Marklea way—his bairn's badly, he makes out."

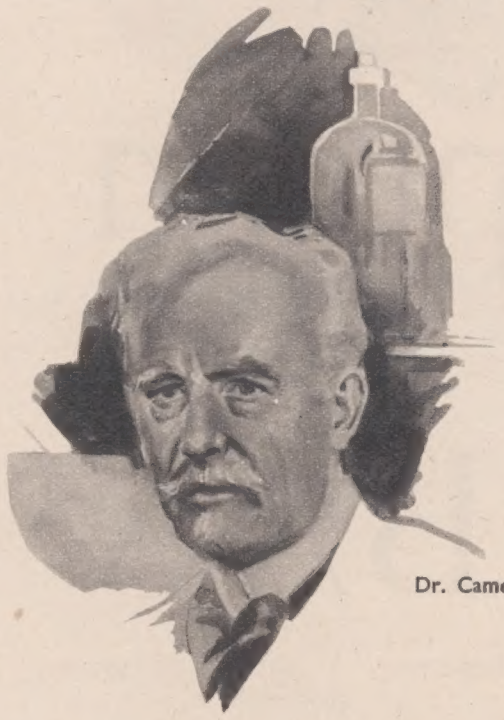
Cameron arrested a piece of oatcake halfway to his mouth to let out his favourite oath:

"Dammit to hell!" he cried. "And me up at Marklea this mornin' and passed his very door. Th' infernal eediot! I'll wager the bairn's been sick for days. Do they all think I'm made of steel?"

He checked himself. Then, with a sigh which seemed to let off all his boiling steam, he added in quite a different voice:

"All right, Janet. All right. Let him come in here the now."

In a moment Mackenzie stood in the doorway, cap in hand—a poor, shiftless-looking youngster dressed like a farm labourer, very much abashed by his surroundings, and terribly nervous under the doctor's interrogating eye.



Dr. Cameron.

"It's the bairn, doctor," he muttered, twisting his cap. "The wife thinks it's the croup."

"How long has he been poorly, Lachlan?"

This friendly use of his name gave the young fellow confidence.

"Two days, doctor—but we didna think it was the croup——"

"Ay, ay, Lachlan. The croup! Just so, just so." A pause. "How did ye get in?"

"I just walkit in, doctor, it's no that far."

Not far! It was seven miles from Marklea to Levenford!

Cameron rubbed his cheek slowly.

"All right, Lachlan man! Don't you worry about the bairn. Away with Janet now and have your tea while the gig's bein' got round."

Silence in the dining-room when he had gone. Cameron reflectively stirred his tea. Almost apologetically he said:

"I can't be hard on a poor devil like that. It's a weakness I never seem to get over. He owes me for his wife's last confinement—he'll never pay it. But I'll get out the gig, drive seven miles, see the bairn, drive seven miles back. And what do you think I'll mark against him in the book? One and six—if I don't forget. And what does it matter if I do forget? He'll never pay me a red bawbee in any case. Oh, dammit to hell! What a life for a man who loves fiddles!"

Silence again; then Finlay ventured:

"Maybe you'll let me do the call?"

Cameron took a long pull at his tea. The bright satire was back in his eye as he said:

"That's a braw wee black bag ye've got—ay, I see it on the sofa, brand new and shiny, with your stethoscope and all the new contrivances inside, bonny and complete. No wonder ye're fair itchin' to use it."

He looked Finlay straight in the face.

"All right! Ye can go. But let me warn ye, my lad, in a practice like mine it's not the bag that matters—it's the man!"

He got up.

"Do the call, then, and I'll do the surgery. Do all ye can for Mackenzie's bairn. Take some anti-toxin with ye to be safe. It's on the right-hand shelf as ye go in the wee back room. Here! I'll show ye. I'm not wantin' ye to drive seven miles to find out that croup is liable to mean diphtheria."

The gig was waiting outside the front porch, with Lachlan already in the back, and Jamie, the groom, standing ready with the waterproof sheet. They set off through the wet, dark night.

In the town the rain fell heavily enough, but when they crossed the bridge and breasted Knoxhill it broke upon them in torrents. The wind drove full into their teeth like a hurricane.

Fifteen minutes, and Finlay was half-drenched; his hat saturated, trickles of water oozing down his neck, and his precious bag, which he held upon his knees, streaming like a wet seal. He wanted to

One blow was struck—one sad, solitary punch.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

curse the weather, the practice, and Cameron; but he shut his teeth and said nothing.

It was bad, bad going. The road was dark, too, the gig lamps so blurred by a film of mud that Jamie had difficulty in keeping the horse upon the road. Away to the right, behind massed firs, were the lights of Darroch, vague, unfriendly, and to the left, lying like a great dark beast, the amorphous bulk of Ardfillan Hill.

They went on through the pitch blackness and the rain in silence. Then from ahead came the quick lapping of water against some hidden shore.

"The loch!" said Jamie, by way of explanation. They were the only words spoken during the journey.

The unseen road wound now by this angry, unseen water. Then, three miles on, they bore sharply to the left, and stopped finally at a small steading where a single illuminated window seemed somehow swamped and hopeless in the great void of sodden blackness.

As they climbed out of the gig, Lachlan's wife opened the door. She looked no more than a girl despite her clumsy sacking apron and uncouth brogues.

A coil of hair fell carelessly down her neck, and her big eyes were dark and youthful against the anxious pallor of her face.

She helped Finlay out of his wet coat in silence; then, though she still said not a word, her worried eye indicated that kitchen bed.

Finlay walked over to the bed, his boots squelching on the stone-flagged floor.

A little boy of three lay tossing under a single blanket, his brow damp with sweat, his face completely livid as he gasped and struggled for breath.

For all Finlay's inexperience, one glance was enough. Laryngeal diphtheria!

Quickly with his finger he depressed the child's tongue. Yes! The whole of the fauces covered with thick, greenish-white membrane.

"I've made him some gruel, doctor," the mother murmured. "But he doesna—doesna seem to fancy it."

"He can't swallow," Finlay said.

Because he was nervous his voice sounded unsympathetic, even harsh.

"Is he bad, then, doctor?" she whispered, with a hand at her breast.

"Bad!" thought Finlay with his fingers on the pulse. "She doesn't dream how bad he is!"

Bending down, he made a complete and careful examination. There was no doubt at all the child was dying.

What a horrible position, he thought again, that this should be his first case—a moribund child.

He went to his bag, opened it, filled the big syringe with eight thousand units of anti-diphtheritic serum. The child barely moaned as the needle sank into his thigh and the serum slowly filtered in.

To gain time, Finlay went back to the fire.

Jamie and Lachlan were in the room now, too, for it was the only warm place in the house.

They stood together by the door. *He could feel their eyes on him, watchful, expectant, together with the terrified eyes of the mother.*

He was the centre of that humble room. They looked to him to do something for the child.

What was he to do? He knew very well what he should do. But he was afraid.

He returned to the bed. If anything, the boy was worse. In half an hour, before the serum could act, he would be dead from obstruction of the wind-pipe.

Another grave wave of fear came over Finlay. He had to make up his mind. Now—at once—or it would be too late.

Automatically he faced round. He felt himself so young, so utterly inept and inexperienced in the face of the great elemental forces which surged within the room.

He was pale to the lips. He said, in a manner wholly unimpressive:

"The boy has diphtheria. The membrane is blocking the larynx. There's only one thing to do. Operation. Open the windpipe below the obstruction."

The mother wrung her hands, and screamed:

"Oh, no doctor, no!"

Finlay turned to Jamie.

"Lift the boy on to the table."

There was a second's hesitation; then slowly Jamie went over and lifted the almost senseless child on to the scrubbed pine table. But at that Lachlan broke down.

"I canna stand it! I canna stand it!" he cried weakly, and looked around desperately for an excuse. "I'll away and put the horse in the stable."

Blubbering, he rushed out.

Now the mother had recovered herself. Pale as a ghost, her hands clenched fiercely she looked at Finlay.

"Tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

"Stand there and hold his head back tight!"

Finlay swabbed the skin of the child's throat with iodine.

He took a clean towel, and laid it across those glazing eyes. The case was far beyond chloroform; madness to think of using it.

Jamie was holding the oil-lamp near.

Setting his teeth, Finlay picked up the lancet. He made the incision with a steady hand, but he felt his legs trembling beneath him.

A deep incision, but not deep enough. He must go deeper, deeper—go boldly in, yet watch all the time for the jugular vein. If he cut that vein!

He widened the incision, using the blunt end of the scalpel, searching desperately for the white cartilage of the trachea.

The child, roused by pain, struggled like a fish in a strangling net. God! would he never find it?

He was guddling hopelessly, messing about—he knew it—the child would die; they would say that he had killed him.

He cursed himself in spirit. Beads of sweat broke out on his brow.

The child's breathing was terrible now, thin, infrequent; the whole of its tiny thorax sucked and sobbed over each frightful, useless breath. Its neck veins were engorged, the throat livid, the face blackening. Not a minute longer, thought Finlay! He's finished, and so am I.

For one sickening instant he had a quick vision of all the operations he had known—of the cold, immaculate precision of MacEwen's theatre, and then, by frightful contrast, of this struggling, desperate thing dying under his knife upon a kitchen table by the flare of an oil-lamp, while the wind howled and stormed outside.

Oh, God, he prayed, help me, help me now.

He felt his eyes misting. A great emptiness possessed his whole being. And then, under his searching knife, the thin white tube sprang into view.

Swift as thought he incised it, and in the instant the child's gasping ceased. Instead, a long clear breath of air went in through the opening. Another—another. The cyanosis vanished, the pulse strengthened.

Swept by a terrific reaction, Finlay felt that he was going to faint. Afraid to move, he kept his head down to hide the smarting tears that sprang into his eyes. I've done it, he thought; oh, God, I've done it after all!

Later, he slipped the tiny silver tracheotomy tube into the opening. He washed the blood from his hands, lifted the child back to bed. Its temperature had fallen a point and a half. He sat by the bedside watching it, cleaning the tube of mucus. He felt a strange, benign interest in the child: he studied its little face, no longer strange to him.

From time to time the mother replenished the

(*continued on next page*)

Continuing BAPTISM *of the* BAG

fire so silently she was like a shadow in the room. Jamie and Lachlan were asleep upstairs.

At five in the morning, Finlay gave another four thousand units of serum. At six the child was sleeping peacefully. At seven he rose and stretched himself. Smiling, he said :

"He'll do now, I expect!" And he explained to the mother the method of clearing out the tube. "In ten days it'll all be healed up good as new."

Now there was no terror in her eyes, but a gratitude moving and inarticulate, like the gratitude of some dumb creature to a god.

The horse was harnessed, the gig brought round. They all drank a cup of tea standing. The rain had stopped long since. And at half-past seven Jamie and he were off, striking through the pale glory of the morning.

Strangely, Jamie was no longer taciturn; he had a word for this and that, a word of comradeship which fell graciously on Finlay's ears.

It was close on nine when Finlay, tired, unshaven, and clutching the mud-splashed bag, stumbled into the dining-room of Arden House.

Cameron was there, fresh as a new pin, humming a little tune—he had an exasperating habit of humming in the morning!—as he inspected a dish of bacon and eggs.

He looked Finlay up and down; then with a dry twinkle in his eye, before the other could speak, he declared :

"There's one guid thing has happened anyway! Ye've taken the newness off your bag."

They sat in to breakfast together.

Though poets have assured us that man is the master of his fate, and novelists presented us with heroes who, having once set their teeth, grimly pursue their purpose to the bitter end—in reality things don't happen that way.

Life makes sport even of those gentlemen who so splendidly clench their molars; and, in spite of the poet's assertion to the contrary, the bloody head is almost always bowed.

It would be pleasant to exhibit Finlay Hyslop in the best Victorian tradition—a strong and silent youth whose glittering pledges were never unfulfilled. But Finlay was human. Finlay had as much to put up with as you or I. And, often as not, circumstance played spillikins with his most fervent resolutions.

One afternoon, some months after he had come to Levenford, he was sitting in the surgery doing nothing. He was, in fact, quite glad to be doing nothing, for his morning round had been arduous, his lunch heavy and late. With his hands in his pockets and his legs stretched out, he reclined in his chair feeling the soporific quality of Janet's suet dumplings steal pleasantly upon his senses.

His eyes had just closed, his head nodded twice, when the surgery bell jangled violently and Charlie Bell barged into the room. Standing on no ceremony, Charlie exclaimed :

"I'm wanting my mother's bottle!"

Charlie didn't say it like that; what he did say, in the roughest dialect of Levenford, was : "Am wan'in ma mither's bo-all." But Charlie's phonetics defy polite comprehension and must, with infinite regret, be sacrificed to more normal speech.

Finlay started in annoyance, partly at being disturbed, partly because he felt sure he had bolted the side door of the surgery, but most of all because of the rudeness of Charlie Bell. He answered curtly :

"The surgery's shut at this hour."

"Then, what way do you leave the door open?" Charlie retorted irritatingly.

"Never mind about the door. I'm telling you the surgery's closed. Call back again this evening."

"Call back! Me!" Charlie jibed contemptuously. "I'll call back twice for nobody."

Finlay glared at Charlie—a thickset, burly youth of about twenty-five, with terrific shoulders, a pale, hard face, small, derisive eyes, and a close-cropped, brick-red head.

Well back on this bullet head sailed a cap—known locally as a hooker—which he had not troubled to remove, and round his short neck a flamboyant red muffler was knotted carelessly. Charlie's air was altogether careless; from his earliest days he had never given a damn—not for anyone, had Charlie.

As a boy he had played truant, been flogged, and played truant cheerfully once again. He had rung bells, broken windows, and led a juvenile gang, had frequently been drowned—almost—by bathing out of his depth in the River Leven. If ever a stranger appeared in the High Street of Levenford, you may be sure Charlie's voice was the first to raise the ribald yell : "Haw! Luk at his hat!"—or his boots—or his face—as the case might be.

He excelled at every game, from football, played with a tin can in the gutter, to fighting—oh! fighting best of all. Expulsion from school, when it inevitably arrived, was sheer delight. Then Charlie became a rivet-boy in the yard, where he heated rivets and tossed them to the holders-on aloft, not forgetting occasionally to drop one into the jacket of a colleague—a blazing pocket made glorious sport!

That was years ago, of course. Now Charlie was a riveter himself, acknowledged leader of the crowd who hung about Quay Corner, the owner of a whippet bitch called Nellie, a regular lad, known to his intimates as Cha, tougher, harder than the rivets that he battered into the iron hulls of ships.

And now, warming under Finlay's stare, Cha thrust his head forward pugnaciously.

"Luk at me! Go on and luk at me! But do ye hear what I'm sayin'? I'm askin' ye to make up my mother's bottle."

"It's made up," said Finlay in a hard voice, and he made a movement over his shoulder towards the shelf. "But you can't have it now. It's against our rules. You must call at the proper time."

"Is that a fact?" declared Cha, breathing hard.

"Yes," said Finlay heatedly. "It's a fact. And when you do come again, perhaps you'd mend your manners just a trifle. You might remove your cap, for example . . ."

"Holy gee!" Cha laughed insolently. "An' supposin' I don't?"

Finlay got up slowly. He was flaming. Taking his time, he approached Cha.

"In that case we might teach you to do it," he answered in a voice that trembled with anger.

"Aw! Shut yer face," Cha answered flatly. He stopped laughing to arrange his blunt features in a belligerent sneer. "Do ye think you could teach me onything?"

"Yes," shouted Finlay. Clenching his fists he rushed in at Cha.

By all the ethics of fiction there should have been a great fight—a magnificent combat in which Finlay, the hero, finally knocked Cha, the villain, for a boundary and six runs.

What actually happened was quite different. *One blow was struck—one sad, solitary punch.* Then, two minutes later, Finlay woke up in a sitting position with his back against the wall, dazed and slightly sick, with blood trickling stupidly from the corner of his mouth.

By this time Cha, with his mother's medicine in his pocket, and his cap more insolently atilt on his ginger head, was striding down the middle of Church Street, whistling a lively air.

Finlay sat where he was for a long time; then, with his head ringing dizzily, he picked himself up. Inside him everything was black and bitter as gall. He burned at the memory of Cha's insolence, raged at his own hopeless inadequacy. He was young, strong, thirsting to batter Cha's ugly face, and yet—he groaned in a perfect agony of humiliation.

As he went to the sink and bathed his face he set himself doggedly to puzzle the matter out. Cha could box, so much was obvious, while he couldn't box at all. He had never thought about it even, never come up against a situation like this. And then, like a lamb, he had walked straight into that devilish punch of Cha's.

Cha! How he hated him—the insolent swine! Something had to be done about it—something must be done about it. He couldn't lie down under an insult like that. To this effect he swore a tremendous oath—after which he felt better.

Then he finished drying his face and, knitting his brows, he sat down at the desk to think. The result of that profound self-communion was to bring together Finlay and Sergeant A. P. Galt.

Archie Galt was "at the barracks." Indeed, the worthy sergeant had been at the barracks, without appearing to grow one hour older, as long as most folks could remember. A tall ramrod of a man with a dried-up face, waxed moustache, tight trousers, and the chest of a prize pigeon, Archie Galt combined the duties of recruiting sergeant and drill instructor to the Volunteers.

Fitness was his fetish. He had muscles all over his body, muscles which stood out like billiard balls in the most unexpected places at the word of command. And he had medals—medals for wrestling, for fencing, for boxing; indeed, rumour had it that in his day Archie had been runner-up in the army heavies. Whether or not rumour lied is no matter, the fact remained that Archie certainly could box.

That first afternoon in the big, draughty drill hall he hit Finlay hard and plenty—not, mind you, as Cha had hit him, but calm, judicial blows which jolted and rattled and shook and searched everywhere, beautifully tempered blows, any one of which—had the worthy sergeant chosen to let go—would have stretched out Finlay in undignified oblivion.

And at the end of it Galt pulled off his enormous gloves sadly.

"It's nae guid, sir," he observed broadly—for Africa, India, and the whole Sudan had not conquered Archie's doric. "Ye's better stick to your doctoring. Ye havena the first idea about handlin' yerself."

"I can learn," panted Finlay. The sweat streamed down his face; the last punch but one had taken him in the bread-basket and left him gasping. "I must learn. I've got a reason . . ."

"Umph!" returned Archie, doubtfully twirling the waxed moustache.

"It's my first lesson," Finlay doggedly persisted, gulping in the air. "I'll stick in. I'll try hard. I'll come every day."

The shadow of a grin broke over Archie's impassive face, and vanished instantly.

"Ye're no' feared," he said non-committally. "And that's aye something."

So the campaign began. Finlay stopped the stroll he usually took of an evening to the Lea Brae. Instead, he came to the drill hall, entering quietly by the back way after dark and slipping quickly into a sweater and shorts.

Then he set to with the sergeant, learning the mysteries of the straight left, the cross, the counter, the hook, learning to feint, to use his feet, his head—learning everything the sergeant could teach him. He took some awful hammerings. The more he learned the harder Archie hit him. He found out how soft he was—he—Finlay Hyslop—who had always prided himself upon his rude health.

He went into terrific training. He rose early, took a run and a cold bath before breakfast. Without a pang he cut out Janet's delicious pastry from his diet. Deliberately, wickedly, he set out to make himself hard as nails.

Cameron, of course, sniffed something in the air. His eye, penetrating and caustic, often lingered upon Finlay when he passed a dish at table or came down in the morning with a slight thickening of his ear. But, though once or twice he nearly smiled, he said nothing. Cameron had the gift of silence.

By the end of one month Finlay was boxing well; by the end of three his improvement was really extraordinary. At the end of May he came on with a rush and, one night, having gone six fast three-minute rounds with Archie, he finished up with a terrific wallop to the jaw which rocked the sergeant to his heels.

"That's enough to be going on wi'," said Archie decisively, as he peeled off his gloves. "I'm not taking no hammerin' from a laddie half my age."

"What are you blethering about?" Finlay demanded in wonder, with his gloves on his hips.

Archie took a slug at the water bottle, and professionally squirted it from the corner of his mouth. Then he allowed himself the pleasure of a smile.

"I mean just this, sir. I've taught ye all I can." He grinned broadly. "It's high time ye found somebody your own age to hit."

"Am I any good, then?"

"Good! Man, ye're damned good! This last couple of weeks ye've come on like a house on fire. But I aye said ye had the makings of a bonny fechter."

He paused, then, with sudden curiosity, went on :

"Now that ye're as guid as I can make ye maybe ye'd be telling me something. What was that reason ye spoke about, if it's not too big a question?"

Finlay stood silent for a minute, then he told Archie about Cha. And again that slow grin broke over the sergeant's rugged face.

"Bell," he declared. "I ken him well—the bull-necked rowdy. He's a slugger if ever there was one. But you've got the measure of him now. Ye'll teach him a lesson he's long been needin'."

"D'you honestly think so, Archie?"

"Man, I'm sure on it. I'm not sayin' but what it'll be a bonny fecht. But as I'm a sodjer, I wouldna like to be in Cha Bell's shoes by the time ye've done wi' him."

Finlay went home that night with determination

(*continued on page* 42)

A Question too Many for G.B.S.

STAGE folk never tire of speculating on the effect of Films and Radio on their profession. In their pessimistic way they fear the worst, and it was to discover what one of the oracles of their craft had to say about their plight that Miss Dorothy Royal, the actress, wrote to Bernard Shaw asking him to reveal his thoughts on the subject. There's no sympathy in his replies, only the hard-hitting we expect from a mind that thrives on argument.

Miss Dorothy Royal

"There is a mind behind his mumming. His personality is tragic"

"I have never seen her in what is called a low life part"

MISS Royal : What do you consider, Mr. Shaw, is the reason for thed ecay and almost the death of Variety entertainment in this country? Is it due to modern artists being inferior to the old stars of the music-hall, like Dan Leno, Marie Lloyd, Victoria Monks, Charles Coburn, Albert Chevalier, and others; or do you consider that the cinema is the cause?

◆ ◆ ◆

G.B.S. : I see no signs of decay and death. The old music-hall, like so many old theatres, has become a picture house; but its artists are not dead : they have gone over to the wireless. This is technically a new job; and they have not half learnt it yet : they still cling to the old appeals to the eye, forgetting that they are now invisible. And they cannot get on without a *claque* to encourage them with applause and laughter, which shows how weak their minds still are. But there is as much talent as ever; only its possessors must bear in mind that it is useless to redden your nose and pretend to trip over a banana peel when your audience cannot see you.

◆ ◆ ◆

Miss R. : The early Charlie Chaplin comedy films that made the reputation of that great artist were based on the exaggerated wistful humour of the incidents of the daily lives of common people. Do you think that Chaplin is really greater, when you allow for the capabilities of the films, compared with a twenty minutes turn at a music-hall, say, than Dan Leno?

◆ ◆ ◆

G.B.S. : Dan Leno was a genius in his limited way; but Chaplin is much more than a funny man. He is a dramatist, a scenic inventor, a great pantomimist who has made a world reputation without uttering a word, though his last film let slip the secret that he is a remarkable singer. His personality is tragic; and it is this that gives such an extraordinary intensity to his fun. There is a mind behind his mumming. You should not make these comparisons. They are unfair to poor Dan, who did what he could do superbly.

◆ ◆ ◆

Miss R. : Mae West and her wisecracks appear to have taken the English-speaking world by storm. Do you consider that she is as great a portrayer of low life as say Jenny Hill, or is her personality as magnetic as Marie Lloyd's? Is Mae West capable of expressing volumes with a wink and a shrug like Marie Lloyd did in her songs?

◆ ◆ ◆

G.B.S. : I have never seen Miss West in what is called a low life part. But do not fall into the common mistake of supposing that Marie Lloyd's charm lay in the winks and shrugs with which she illustrated the appalling doggerel she used to sing. Any of her competitors could wink and shrug and appeal to the popular love of smut as well as or better than she. Her secret, and that of her rival Bessie Bellwood, was an exquisite accuracy of tune and rhythm. You had to dance to the lilt of "Oh, Mister Porter" as she sang it. Ask anyone else to sing it, and see whether any extremity of winking and shrugging will make it go.

◆ ◆ ◆

Miss R. : Do you consider that there would be a chance for we Variety artists if we abandoned the existing variety halls and devoted our energies and abilities to producing variety films?

◆ ◆ ◆

G.B.S. : I expect you will have to. But I repeat, the wireless, especially now that television is coming, is your main chance. And audiences of millions of sober respectable people instead of the old mob of Champagne Charlies will make you sit up. The music-hall artist, even the second and third rate ones, will have to be something of a real artist then.

◆ ◆ ◆

Miss R. : It is said that variety entertainments are dead, yet how is it that programmes are more flourishing than ever and non-stop revues attract vast and paying audiences? What attracts their large and regular patrons? Is it the talent of the performers or the appeal of nearly undressed women?

◆ ◆ ◆

G.B.S. : Who says that variety entertainments are dead? Evidently people who do not know what they are talking about. But are you not doing a little of that yourself when you talk of the appeal of nearly undressed women? Clothes are the secret of that sort of appeal. In Victorian days, when it was possible to pass a lifetime without catching a glimpse of a woman's ankle, what is now called S.A. was at its height. Nowadays, when women with less clothes on than Pacific islanders are as common objects as motor buses, Victorian sex appeal is happily dead. The real mistresses of that art are always dressed from their necks to their heels.

◆ ◆ ◆

Miss R. : Some years ago you refused to have your plays filmed although you were offered huge sums to have them produced as silent pictures. If my memory serves me you said : "Films are the rubbish heaps of plays. My plays are immortal." Do you still believe that plays should not be filmed?

◆ ◆ ◆

G.B.S. : I have no recollection of saying anything of the sort. But, of course, the silent film was no use to me. "Back to Methuselah" would make a very poor movie. When movies became talkies my turn came. I am keen to have my plays filmed provided it is done in my way, and not by the office boy; but Hollywood and Elstree mostly consider that I do not know my business and that the office boy does. Hence our misunderstandings.

◆ ◆ ◆

Miss R. : Speaking personally, would you prefer, Mr. Shaw, to see the people of this country and America become drama and variety fans as of old, rather than movie fans?

◆ ◆ ◆

G.B.S. : Speaking personally, I should prefer to see them become Shaw fans.

◆ ◆ ◆

Miss R. : Finally, do you think that the extension of the movies will eventually extinguish the drama and variety and that in future these arts will only be kept alive by societies of genuine enthusiasts, whilst the majority will only pay to witness talkies?

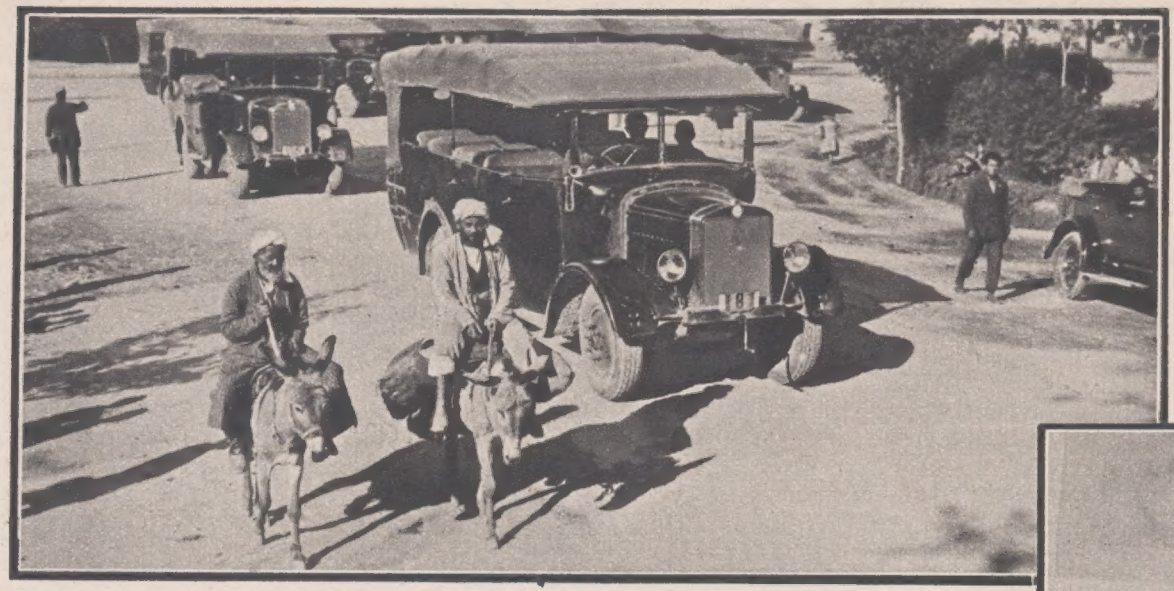
Just one question too much.
Enough is enough.

G. Bernard Shaw

THE LOST GENERATION

Rosita Forbes

● Inveterate woman traveller recently returned from Central Asia, describes the women who have escaped from the Harem to work in the factories . . . . .



● Almost every person and thing in Bokhara serves to illustrate the remarkable contrast between two generations that exists there. This street scene does so

● Usbeg marriage as it was and, below, as it is to-day. Note the bride's horse-hair veil in the picture above

IN far-off Bokhara, once the most learned city of Central Asia and the capital of a tyrannical Emir who caused his prisoners to be devoured by mammoth bugs, or thrown from the top of the 170-feet Tower of Death, now a provincial town in the autonomous Soviet republic of Usbegistan—in Bokhara, city of tombs and storks, of silk factories and cotton farms, I looked out of a window in the communal lodging-house where, for ten roubles a night, I hired one of a row of very clean, very hard beds in a white-washed dormitory and I saw . . . Well, I saw a great many things.

First of all the ancient citadel, reared upon the top of the Emir's prisons where the cells were smaller than cages and lined with spikes. Then the new water-tower, which is particularly hideous since it is made of galvanised-iron and painted in utilitarian colours. Then a lovely mosque with pineapple tops to its columns, which is now a Workers' Club. But what interested me most were the contrasts in the dusty square, round which the new town, with theatre, university, clinics and so on, is rapidly growing.

Perpetual Night

An old woman rode on a donkey. She was covered from head to foot in a tattered, dirty cloak called a *parandja* and over her face hung a still dirtier *chadour*, a veil or screen made of horse-hair bound about the forehead and reaching to the knees. The wearer lives in perpetual night, for the coarse, stiff material shuts out everything but the dust.

Within a few yards of this shapeless bundle carried along blind and futile on the animal that used to be considered the hansom-cab of Bokhara (the camel was the four-wheeler) I saw a young Usbeg girl in a print frock with a white kerchief round her head cranking up a lorry. When the engine started she climbed into her seat with a considerable display of bare leg and, honking gaily, went off at thirty miles an hour, leaving the old woman in a wake of dust.

I saw two young Jewesses who, under the old regime, would have been forced to hide themselves beneath those unhygienic horse-hair veils, walking in the sunshine, long plaits hanging to their waists, embroidered caps perched jauntily above deliciously flowered shawls.

The New Era

They carried portfolios under their arms, and were evidently on their way to college. I saw Usbeg girls in running shorts and sweaters tearing round the public garden that is just beginning to enliven the famous square that has seen more executions and massacres than any other space of its size in Central Asia.

A peasant woman in knee boots of soft Russian leather, the rest of her invisible under the *parandja* and *chadour*, watched these products of the new era with . . . who knows what feelings! On her head was a basket of pickled cucumbers; on her back a baby and a bundle of fowls; under her armpit, quite probably, a small cardboard box containing a hundred thousand or so silkworms' eggs, because the human body maintains the even temperature necessary for the incubation of the precious caterpillars.

In these contrasts I saw the history of the last fifteen years in Central Asia. For beside the prosperous new towns of Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bokhara, with their well-planned avenues and gardens, there are still miles and miles of mud-walled alleys lined with old houses where old customs linger.

In such dwellings the husband is undisputed master. He may be an octogenarian with grandsons older than his latest wives, for whom he has paid in camels, sheep and carpets, but he alone has the right to raise the dusty black *chadour* under which his women lose their identity with their health and sight. Only he may enter the harem quarter, mud-built, low-roofed, and stifling, with a hole for a charcoal fire in the middle of the floor, over which the family sleep and eat in winter, and round which they sit with their feet hanging over the edge, idling away the hours of gossip, cooking, a little needlework, the eating of a great many melon seeds.

Polygamy is now forbidden by law, but an old man, wearing the *chapan* familiar to his ancestors (a long coat of flowered cotton stuff, thickly wadded and belted with coloured leather) will take you into his "harem" and introduce you to a suspicious number of female relatives who are much more likely to be wives than the sisters, daughters and cousins he claims.

In such a house I talked with a woman of thirty-four who looked about sixty. For sole furniture there was a chest containing her best clothes, some quilts which at night made a bed on the floor, a row of gaily painted teapots made in Russia, and on the wall an unfinished carpet. Superstition enjoins that a bride must bring this symbol of her industry to her new home, but she must never finish it or she will lose her life with the last stitches. The carpet is completed by her friends after her funeral and the handicraft of her successor takes its place—unfinished—on the wall.

The room in which I sat with "the Mother of Mohammed," who appeared to have forgotten her own name and to be quite content with that of her son, opened on to a court enclosed by high walls of clay mixed with chopped straw and camels' urine, shaped and smoothed by hand.

Electricity, Radio. . .

Poplars grew beside a pool in which the whole household washed, cooked, and drank.

The "Mother of Mohammed" was concerned solely with the quantity of food she could buy with the sums her husband gave her, and with the possibility of saving a few pennies to provide herself with a coarse green tobacco that is chewed and then spat out.

For twenty years she had never left the dim house to which she had been sold by her parents, except to go to the nearest bazaar, whither she found her way by instinct rather than sight, for her eyes had grown weak in the twilight imposed by tradition and the *chadour*. "But one of my daughters works in a factory," she said with rather

● A typical home of the older generation of Bokhara. The bride's unfinished carpet, symbol of superstition, hangs on the wall, but an electric lamp hangs in the home of her daughter (right)

bewildered pride, "and the other is married in the new way."

I went to see the girl who was "married in the new way." I found her in a four-roomed bungalow, jerry built, but clean, with windows opening on to a porch.

There were plants in pots and a hammock tied to the shoddily painted posts. There was electric light and running water, a primus, a gramophone, and a loudspeaker which, during our prolonged and interesting conversation, emitted a lecture on sugar-beet.

"It's companionable, don't you think?" said my hostess. "I can't go to sleep without it."

She was a pretty olive-skinned girl dressed in European fashion with flesh-coloured stockings and solid shoes. She sat on the floor, although there were several comfortable chairs in the room. She had a permanent wave and powder on her nose. She could speak Russian as well as Usbeg, and was learning German.

She was also learning to dance. "But my husband prefers the cinema," she explained. "We go to every new film because he is interested in lighting. He is an electrician in the new power plant, and this house is ours. We pay fifteen roubles a month for it, and long before we're old we shall have finished paying, so Ivan Ali will have it for nothing."

I doubted whether the house would hold together till Ivan Ali could bring a wife to it, but he was an engaging infant, apple-cheeked and hearty, rolling about on a rug, instead of bound motionless upon a board for the first year of his life as his parents and grandparents had been, with the result that their heads were flattened at the back and their intestines irreparably weakened.

An Ambition

I went also to see the daughter who worked in a factory. I found her sorting silk at a bench with twenty or thirty other women. The older ones had stacked their veils and cloaks upon the window ledges, ready to put them on again when they left the bright and well ventilated factory halls for the streets they still feared.

But my young person was a stranger to the *chadour*. She had been to school and gymnasium. Her round face bore traces of heartily applied soap. Her hair was shingled and her nails polished. She was already, at eighteen, a shock-worker with a reputation to maintain.

Doing piecework at a loom, she made 150 roubles a month, and banked it in her own name at the Women's Club, where she took classes in hygiene, fashion, embroidery, and physics. I fancy she didn't get much sleep, but she was immensely proud of the fact that she had been specially sent to the sorting-room to increase the rate of work.

Her ambition was to go to Moscow. "Bokhara is too old," she said. "For every new house that is built there are a dozen old houses to come down, and in each of them there are tombs." She wrinkled up her nose in dismay at the ancestral habit of burying the particularly holy on the family roofs.

Throughout the republics of Central Asia I found the same gap between the lives of the last generation and the present one. Mothers who had never shown their hands or the tips of their noses to anyone but husband or father, who had never had an idea, or a penny of their own, treated with an almost ludicrous respect daughters who still measure their independence by the shortness of their skirts and the brusque rapidity of their movements.

No Manners

In the new republics manners have gone. There is a great deal of good comradeship, generosity, and a friendly desire to help and interest the stranger but of manners as a social asset, or a natural adjunct, I saw no trace.

The older women in the harem were often great ladies in spite of their ignorance and sloth. Their daughters, working as tram drivers and ticket collectors, railway officials, barbers, street sweepers, saleswomen in shops and kiosks, cab and lorry drivers, station mistresses, doctors, lawyers, even as plumbers and masons, are capable and matter-of-fact. Some of them use lipstick and nail varnish.

Few of them keep the traditional plaits. All of them belong to clubs and clinics. They know all about politics and nothing about religion or geography.

For them the university has taken the place of the mosque where their fathers, still turbanned and bearded, pray five times a day. London, Berlin, and Rome are old-fashioned, and Moscow is the capital of a universe, created by science and supported by regiments of enthusiastic young shock-workers who are rushed from wheat to cotton, from bridge-building to drainage, according to the needs of the moment.

Race for Youth

The old have no place in Central Asia, except in the mosque, and the middle-aged (unless they come under the magic headings of "technical experts" or "specialists," the peerage of the U.S.S.R.), must be as unnoticeable as possible. The race is to the young—and curiously enough to the plain, for as an earnest youth commanding a company of shock-workers explained to me while we jolted along in the van of an "assistance train" taking volunteers to the "cotton front" which has sworn to plough 300,000 acres, "If a girl has too much sex appeal she interferes with our average of work.

We get rid of her as soon as possible."

● The rebuilt modern main street of Bokhara

● Girls sit apart from men to watch Bokhara's first soccer match

● It's something magic to her—electricity

WHAT A LOVELY "SEA-BREEZE" SMELL

THIS is the loveliest Soap you have ever used!

A great big foaming lather—with the "Smell of the Sea" in its creamy bubbles.

Which is actually true—because it contains pure Iodine made from Seaweed collected on the West Coast of Scotland.

Almost magically your skin is cleared of every impurity and beauty blemish. Within ten days you have a skin texture ten years younger.

The more you wash with this Iodine Soap the smoother and clearer and more velvety your skin becomes. Wrinkles and signs of age are gently eased away.

And in the bath you emerge with a glowing body as sweet and fresh as a dewy rose. Sweet all day — however much you perspire from tennis or dancing.

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SIMPSON IODINE SOAP

BRAND

● He waited till the white sweater was outlined against the barn

He Aimed *too High*

SHORT SHORT STORY

Complete on this Page

BY

Lucian Cary

It was still. It was one of those warm still afternoons in September when the leaves of the beech trees have turned to their autumn red and gold. The leaves of the apple trees were dark green and so thick you hardly saw the apples. It was so still the leaves did not rustle. It was so still a rifle bullet would go straight to the mark without any allowance for wind, even at five hundred yards.

Tom Hargreave stood in the doorway of the shed at the back of the house with a pair of glasses. He braced his arm and his body against the door frame so that he could steady the glasses as he studied the ridge across the valley. He saw James Kent in a white sweater half a mile away.

Tom Hargreave had watched the man so often that he could guess what he would do. Kent came striding along the ridge about this time every day. He took such a daily walk as physicians prescribe for men who have lived too hard and made too much money. James Kent could do as he pleased. He always had done as he pleased—even before he had got so many millions. But he could not do as he pleased and go on living.

Tom Hargreave turned his glasses toward the old barn, with hand-hewn timbers, that stood on the ridge a mile to the north of James Kent. The grass was bright green in front of the barn. Tom Hargreave knew that Kent would reach the barn in fifteen or sixteen minutes. He would stop at the corner of the barn and light a cigarette. He had seen Kent do it day after day. The corner of the barn was almost precisely five hundred yards from the wall in front of Hargreave's small, old fashioned apple orchard.

Tom Hargreave went into the shed that served him as a shop for the repair of old furniture and laid the glasses on a shelf. There was a Krag rifle in the corner. It had a target telescope sight of the sort men use for shooting at long range. Tom Hargreave picked up the rifle with the telescope mounted and took out the bolt. He knew the rifle but he was checking himself every step of the way. He was not making any mistakes. He held the muzzle up to the light and looked through the bore. Any man might have noted how bright the bore was, in contrast to the outside of the rifle, with its battered stock. But only one man in a million would have noted what Hargreave made sure of: the barrel had six grooves and six lands as against the four grooves and four lands of a government barrel.

Tom Hargreave put the bolt back, and took a cartridge from a drawer and loaded the gun. He noted that the spare government Krag barrel was lying on the bench. The heavy iron vice was open about the right amount. A pair of hardwood blocks, grooved to take a rifle barrel, lay beside the vice.

He walked slowly toward the corner of the apple orchard. A squirrel scurried across the grass under the apple trees, jumped to the top of the stone wall, and paused to look back. Hargreave whistled sharply. The squirrel paused and sat up to look back. On any other day he would have died for his curiosity. But Hargreave was hunting bigger game.

He reached the corner of the wall and knelt down at a break in the stone wall.

Hargreave glanced at his watch and saw that eleven minutes had gone by. He levelled the rifle carefully. The telescope sight had a small field. But he soon found James Kent striding along toward the barn. Hargreave cocked the gun and waited. He saw James Kent stop and get cigarettes out of his pocket. But still Hargreave waited. He wanted the police to find the bullet that was about to kill James Kent.

Hargreave watched Kent light the cigarette. The cross hairs in the telescope quartered Kent's white sweater. But Hargreave waited until Kent took one step forward, until the white sweater was outlined against the grey boards at the extreme corner of the barn where the big post of the barn frame was. Hargreave pulled the trigger.

Tom Hargreave got up and walked slowly back to the shop. Once inside the door he worked fast. He took the telescope off the rifle and put it on the other gun. He took the stock off the rifle he had fired. He fitted the grooved wooden blocks on the barrel, close to the receiver, and set it up in the vice. He put a big wrench on the receiver and turned the barrel out.

He put the barrel he had fired in the lathe, fitted a reamer, and started the electric motor. The reamer slowly, steadily ground its way, taking the rifling out of the barrel.

While the machine was at work, removing the tell-tale marks of the rifling, Hargreave took up the spare government barrel and put it into the action and screwed it up solidly and fitted the stock on it and stood it in the corner.

When the reamer had gone through the barrel on the lathe he took it out and swabbed the inside with a patch wet in an acid.

The police came several hours later. Hargreave opened the door, and saw the sergeant and behind him three or four of his men.

"Have you got a .30-calibre rifle?" the sergeant asked.

"I have," Tom Hargreave said. "I've got a Krag rifle."

"Let's see it," the sergeant said.

Hargreave led the way into the shed. The sergeant picked up the gun.

"What do you use this for?"

"Shooting deer," Hargreave said. "I've killed half a dozen deer across the valley with that rifle—as far as four hundred yards."

"I think, Hargreave," the sergeant said, "I think you'd better come with us."

"What's the charge?"

"Murder," the sergeant said. "James Kent was shot this afternoon and you're the only man in the neighbourhood who has a rifle that might have done it."

Hargreave answered all their questions at the police station without rancour. He denied that he knew James Kent by sight. He was confident that no one knew about Cora except James Kent, and James Kent was dead. Cora had died two years after she had left Hargreave and gone away with Kent.

The police gave up questioning him at last and put him in a cell.

"Sergeant," Hargreave said, "isn't it my privilege to get legal advice?"

"It is," the sergeant said.

"Get me a lawyer," Hargreave said.

He had killed Kent and in a few hours the authorities would be convinced he was innocent. Any good ballistic expert would tell them the bullet that had killed Kent had not been fired from the rifle they had found in his shop.

Hargreave heard steps at last and the lawyer appeared at his cell door. He was a plump man with a round, ruddy face.

"The sergeant told me they had found the bullet that killed James Kent," Hargreave said. "If this is true, any first-class ballistic expert can prove that the bullet did not come from one of my rifles. He can enlarge a microphotograph of the bullet that killed Kent and compare it with microphotographs of bullets that have been fired from my rifles. They can do that."

"They won't have to do that," the other replied. "They've got a fellow who is an authority on arms. He says anybody can see the bullet didn't come from the rifle they found in your shop. Your rifle has four grooves and the bullet that killed Kent was fired from a rifle with six grooves."

"What are they holding me for, then?" Hargreave asked.

"Well," the solicitor said, "you know the Foster boys? Their father runs the garage up the street. One is twelve and the other fourteen."

"What about them?" Hargreave cried.

"Nothing much. Nothing—only—boys will steal apples. You know that. When they heard you whistle they climbed a tree. They saw you do it."

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They're Not your Lucky Stars

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Gerald Heard explains that although your fate is not tied up in the sky the stars have something to tell us.

OUR age is a "queer-things" age, but few of them are queerer than the revival of Astrology. Even belief in war locks and witches did not seem more safely dead than belief in the reading of human fate in the movement of the stars. Still here it is back again. "Conjunctions" are interpreted. People are eager to know under what "sign" they were born. The phrase "casting your horoscope," which in the last century needed explaining now appears in half a dozen popular newspapers. Everyone knows what it means and tens of thousands firmly believe (to the cost of paying a fee for a cast of their own fate) that it means something.

All this is unexpectedly queer. Nothing seemed more certain than that, whatever else managed to stage a come-back, astrology could not. For it was the very study giving rise to astrology, that disproved it. Astrology has a long history. In fact all star study is astrology right down to the modern age. When man first began to watch the stars we cannot say.

Up All Night

Certainly as far back as we can watch him at this game we find he is not doing it for fun. He sits up all night and notes night after night how these tiny points of light move, because he is sure that their movements matter immensely to him. It is quite amazing, when we study the history of this subject, to see how patient and exact ancient men must have been at this job. For they mapped out the whole night sky and discovered that there were continents of stars—the constellations—making a great geography of the sky and, further, that on this background of "fixed stars," the sun itself moved from place to place and, cruising about among these continents, were a few "wanderers" which they called the planets—a word meaning wanderer.

Astronomers are still developing the science of the universe as they gaze through their "sky-guns"

The work must have been very tiring but these very early men, who had to work hard enough by day to keep themselves, yet felt when dog-tired it was worth star-gazing all night because they were sure their future was being spelt out by the stars. So the work went on until when men got telescopes the size of the star-universe revealed by this magnification became staggering. One of the founders of modern star study, the great Kepler, still believed in astrology, still thought that individual human events were forecast in the sky.

He was, however, the last so to think. Astrology, the belief that you could make a real applied science out of the stars, that you could know what they "meant," gave way to astronomy, to just noting what they did, cataloguing their sizes, their brightnesses, the way they moved and their relationships—not to us but to each other.

The reasons for this were obvious. First was this new telescope fact of the universe's sheer size. Before the telescope men could think the night sky was a sort of dial on which the stars moved as pointers. Now all star students knew that the sky was so vast that in comparison with it not only was the earth less than a sand grain in the largest ocean, but also the sun and planets themselves were equally insignificant. It was that second fact, even more than the first (that our earth was as nothing beside the other worlds, infinite spaces, super stars, island universes), that knocked the bottom out of astrology.

For you might disregard mere size. A message is still a message whether I write it, as records are printed in the great Brussels library, on a microscope slide only to be read through a microscope or whether I send it in a series of radio waves each miles high sweeping right round the world.

But if I find that all the dots and dashes, strokes and lines which I took to be letters and words, really bear no relation to one another, then I must climb down from my perch as interpreter and prophet.

And it was that which astronomy showed. It simply made hay of the old symbols and signs through which astrology claimed to read fate. First it took the planets. The ancient astrology was based on seven sacred planets; seven being a sacred number seemed to show that the seeker must be on the right tack.

Five were the five planets visible to the naked eye: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the other two were made up by adding the sun and the moon.

Then Herschell found Uranus, and that was followed by the discovery of Neptune. Some astrologers shifted their hand. They discarded the sun and the moon—which certainly were embarrassing—one having shown itself to be a star, not a planet, and the other having been found to be our own satellite—and they took on Uranus and Neptune and so now had seven bona fide planets.

Revolt Against Reason

It was no good. In our own day, out beyond Neptune, has turned up Pluto. Eight planets, the earth itself a planet, the sun a star, the moon our satellite—the astrologer was in a very difficult hole. But worse was to follow. The planets had to be resorted and regraded. The same was happening with the true stars themselves. Many of the most outstanding constellations were simply coming to pieces.

The stronger the telescopes became the clearer it grew that not only were there no "fixed stars," the whole drift of them was whirling about like snowflakes in a blizzard, but that many we first thought of as belonging to the same constellation did nothing of the sort.

We thought they made a system, just as a child looking up Ludgate Hill might think the black spire of the church half way up was part of St. Paul's that stands behind it. So even the constellations were largely man-made. They were not really so.

Astrology had not a single astronomer left to support it. All the experts had abandoned the old notion, astronomical knowledge went on growing, and science went on winning the respect of the ordinary man, yet there was a revival of astrology. It is no use getting angry and talking about the Revolt against Reason. The job of scientists is not to denounce but to explain. They have to study men with just the same inexhaustible interest as they have to study stars, and when we look into

(*continued on page* 17)

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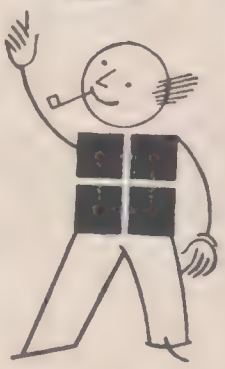

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Continuing

They're NOT your LUCKY STARS

this question we discover two very interesting facts that certainly help us to be patient and one of which may give us a completely new advance in knowledge.

The first is the fact that astrologers and astronomers, like most controversialists, generally spend their time in arguing about different things. The astronomer says, "The stars can tell you nothing about life down here. I can prove it by showing you how far away they are and how the arrangements of them which you see are not their real order."

The astrologer does not now reply to this, but says, "The stars do tell things about life and I can prove it by forecasting events." Few astrologers study modern astronomy. Even fewer astronomers study modern—or any other astrology.

So neither convinces the other. The astronomer who really wants to check superstition should take up the task of studying horoscopes, showing what they foretold and demonstrating that it did not happen. Naturally he is content to say it cannot happen. But that is no answer to the ordinary man who believes it has happened.

Anyone who has studied any form of prophecy knows how hard it is to disprove. The scientist too often dismisses all forecasting in which results follow but the reasons for those results seem to him wrong, by remarking "*post hoc propter hoc*," because this happened after that, this is (wrongly) claimed to be due to that. The scientist sometimes forgets that we have, even in the most scientific forecast, no other proof that this followed that and so that may have caused this.

Why Stars?

The first fact, then, we have to face is that many people believe they have proved that certain arrangements of stars were followed by certain events down here. But why settle on the stars as forecasters? Why not on flights of ducks or other birds, or what the inside of a newly killed goose looks like, or how ants behave when you poke their ant-hill, or how chickens bolt their grain when you throw it to them? All these methods have been used as much as astrology. Why hark back to the stars? The stars have been put in their places and out of our province, it would seem, much more thoroughly than birds' flight (still a queer mystery) or indeed the behaviour of any living creatures.

The first reason is all too obvious, but I doubt whether it would have won through if it had not been backed by a second, a much less obvious and more important reason. The first reason is, true enough, our general excitement. To-day we are all for "gestures" and dramatic actions and for "following our destiny" and "striking decisive blows" for liberty or honour or anything else that seems to call for blows and more blows. Now men of destiny and fate and action have always had a weakness for stars. They will trust nothing less than their lucky star.

Let the common easy fellow trust his lucky sixpence. All "out size" militarist adventurers have been clients of astrologers. The great ruthless Roman Emperor who campaigned as far north as Scotland, Septimius Severus, was an addict. The great German adventurer, Wallenstein, in the sixteen hundreds was another such. Napoleon was always vapouring about his star. It would surprise the public to know how many militarists to-day puzzle over their horoscopes. It is quite natural, though.

Science and Superstition

Soldiers always have to be gamblers and big soldiers have to be more than a little, megalomaniacs. Believing themselves to be lucky is half their luck, and more than half their success is pure luck. So as they have to gamble and feel their dignity needs big dice, they dice with stars.

That, however, does not explain why the man in the street should also want to have a "flutter in constellations" and put something on the planets. Of course, as we are all more snobs than we allow, he likes to keep company with the great, if only in the sky. But the revival of astrology among the big men of action and the innumerable newspaper readers is due to that second, little noticed reason mentioned above.

It is science itself that has here helped the revival of an interest that embarrasses it. Science during this generation has been steadily reinvestigating what science till then had flung aside as superstition. Time and again some connection noticed by early man and then dismissed by early science as being obviously absurd, has on closer scientific scrutiny shown up to be a real connection.

The first great shock was when, as this century began, alchemy came back. Science had been sure that transmutation of metals was a dream, just that sort of fancy wish which poor primitive man would suffer from. Now, however, alchemy is a fact. We must remember, too, how closely alchemy and astrology were linked. Mercury is the name for an element and also for a planet, and each planet has its chemical attached to it. To the nineteenth-century chemist it would have seemed as impossible to work alchemy as to re-establish astrology. So to the twentieth-century man in the street the fact of transmutation shakes up his slumbering belief that after all there might be "something in this star business."

"Cannot Effect Us"

This difficulty, however, does not stop there. The scientist until the last few years could reply, "Alchemy may be true but keep a sense of proportion. All our advances in astronomy only go on showing how much farther and farther away the stars really are.

The stars cannot affect us." Now that reply has become far less certain. It is radiation that has done that—the discovery that forces we cannot see can profoundly affect us. X-rays and wireless waves showed there were influences that could carry our messages round the world without our seeing their path, and other influences that could kill us, just as invisibly.

The next step was the discovery that the whole universe was full of such radiations. Then it was discovered outer space was particularly full of the most powerful of all—called therefore the cosmic radiation. The last step was only taken a few years ago when suddenly two pieces of research came

Trying to see the invisible

"Even belief in warlocks and witches did not seem more safely dead than the belief in reading human fate in the movement of the stars"

together in a very startling manner. Almost at the same time it was discovered.

That new species, new forms of life can be made (and perhaps only made) by invisible radiation, by radiating a living germ with short-waves; and

That violent short-wave radiation powerful enough to pierce through the protective layers of the upper atmosphere can be sent out (and perhaps only sent out) by "super novae," by stars that blow up in an explosion of a few weeks and then pour out nearly all their energy.

It is therefore now being seriously discussed by experts whether such an explosion in a star, the light of which may take a million years to reach us, may not be the trigger firing the charge which shot across space, pierces to the sub-microscopic nucleus of the germ cell and there rearranges the invisible atoms and so gives rise to a new plant or animal or human being.

No wonder then when such discoveries are being tested out by researchers, the man in the street cannot get the old flat unanimous denial on which he once could base his scepticism firmly. The stars maybe, can affect us. The planets, it is proved, do set up the sun spots and they upset our weather and our radio. We cannot get rid of astrology any more by simply saying it can't happen because the stars are too far and we too small. They do touch us. What we have to settle is just how and with what results.

Not Personal

In short, we have to face up to astrology and not dismiss it out of hand. We have to put a real astro-logy—a real science of the meaning of the stars in the place of the false.

After all, it seems early man was right in saying that he and the universe were somehow linked up, and early science wrong in dismissing that feeling. Where early man and modern superstitious man was and is wrong, is in saying his private fate is tied up in the sky. Early science was right in attacking that provincialism—that egotism. Later science dismisses us greedy little success-seeking men, but it reinstates man and life as important in the universe.

Shakespeare said, flattering his Royal mistress Elizabeth, herself a client of astrologers:

"*When beggars die no stars are seen,*
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of Princes."

Science certainly will delete that flattery but may come to write in its stead: "The heavens themselves blaze forth the birth of species."

That will be the birth of the true astrology and it seems that only with its birth will the false astrology die.

As LUCK would Have it

THE way was long; the wind was cold, so was Mr. Woodpecker. Night had fallen, so had Mr. Woodpecker; he had "tripped over an owd stump an' mucked hisself up wi' 'slud.'" This is how his wife described the occurrence later, and she is a trustworthy woman. Shaken a little, Mr. Woodpecker climbed up a bank and made his way to an ancient cart-shed that stands neglected in the fifteen-acre field of the offhand farm known as Loampits. Here he would wait for the driving rainstorm to pass, and light his pipe in comfort.

He waited on the weather for quite a long time until gradually his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness and saw that the shed was not empty; two large hampers were there, one standing on the other. Each was padlocked. The first was light and easy to handle, the lower only yielded to his strained muscles, a two-man job to move.

The storm passed, the moon emerged cautiously from the cloud wrack. Mr. Woodpecker felt free to do the same, but he stayed awhile to examine both the hampers carefully in the moonlight. Then, in a lull of wind, he heard the approach of a farm cart coming over the field track and, with the least possible noise, slipped behind the shed. The cart came to the front, two men jumped down and started to shift some of the straw in it.

"Now," said one, and they seized the heavy hamper, swung it into the cart and piled the trusses carefully.

"Shall we leave one or two trusses front o' th' t'other one?" he went on.

"We got more'n we want here," said his friend. "We kin spare three or fower."

The cart proceeded at a walking pace out of the field, but not before the moonlight had revealed the horse's identity to Mr. Woodpecker's observant eye. He could not be sure of the men, though one was young and tall; their voices were muffled by the sacks that had kept the rain from their heads and shoulders, but he knows all horses by sight.

This one worked the few fields cultivated by Bill Tench, who keeps an obscure beerhouse or jerry shop called "The Saddler," outside Rasing Tye. It has rather a doubtful reputation, though standing close to the southern boundary of Overshot Priory, residence of Sir Thomas Skinner, O.B.E., J.P., D.L., C.A. To be sure, Mr. Woodpecker did not know how richly Sir Thomas is endowed with capital letters, but there could be no excuse for our ignorance.

Greatly intrigued, Mr. Woodpecker deserted the "Wheatsheaf" for "The Saddler" on the following Saturday night and sat modestly in a corner, with both eyes open. He saw a man whom he did not recognise come in and empty first one pewter and then another, but no money changed hands; the fortunate drinker was a tall, smart young fellow in tweeds and leggings.

"I ain't see he afore, not that I kin remember," remarked Mr. Woodpecker casually to Mr. Mike Miggs, one of the few men round him whom he knew well.

"Nobody ain't," replied Mr. Miggs. "He don't belong, but he's the new underkeeper at th' Priory an' they do say as how Bill Tench is same as his uncle. It ain't a many Bill give beer to. I s'pect he git somethin' f'r it, if it ain't pennies."

"That used to be a rare place f'r game," remarked Mr. Woodpecker, irrelevantly.

"I do hear tell they had a gre't day las' Mond'y," replied Mr. Miggs. "Bob Guiver was a loadin' f'r one o' the' gents an' he towd me."

"The worst of a big day," continued Mr. Woodpecker, innocently, "is you can't cut an' come agen like."

"You can at th' Priory," declared Mr. Miggs. "I do hear tell they put down two thousand birds. They'll take th' south beats nex' Mond'y week an' do well as ever. Owd Sir Thomas reckon to git eight days at th' pheasants, though they don't beat a cover afore November an' they on'y shoot cocks arter Chris'mus."

"That's a piece, mate," replied Mr. Woodpecker indifferently. "Now I mus' be gittin' along," and with these words he retired quietly and set out on his three-mile walk home, his mind as active as his feet. On the following morning he sent what he calls his "youngerest" boy to Mr. Tod Mole, that eminent poacher, asking him if he would "same as come acrost any time arter dinner." Mr. Mole, just risen after a busy night in the woods, sent a message to say he would be there, and arrived with a rabbit in his game pocket, an offering acceptable to his hostess, who graciously expressed the hope that he would stay for a dish o' tea. Mr. Tod Mole is ever generous when occasion permits.

"We'll come back f'r it," suggested Mr. Woodpecker, "a cup o' tea an' a mite o' drippin' toast—eh, Tod?"

"Thanky f'r me," said astute Mr. Mole, addressing himself to Mrs. Woodpecker and thereby nipping in the bud a statement that Sunday was the only day in the week when she could get a mite of rest and that toast is a disturber of her scanty peace.

Mr. Woodpecker and Mr. Mole travelled far, as far as a fifteen-acre field with an old shed holding a few trusses of straw, and behind the straw an empty game-hamper with padlock and key. Then Mr. Mole made a ball of wet clay and took several impressions of the key, though it was but a common one and unworthy of much attention. Thereafter, he and Mr. Woodpecker studied the two approaches to the shed, one by way of a bank from the road and the other by a field path.

"That's the one right enough," declared Mr. Mole, pointing to the bank.

"Middlin' steep to my thinkin', I don't like th' looks on't, and that's th' truth," objected his friend.

"A spade," replied Mr. Mole, "kin cure that in half an hour."

"You gotter brine, Tod," cried Mr. Woodpecker in frank admiration.

"I couldn't live without I had," replied the wise young poacher. "Along of a hand barrer," he continued, "that ain't so hazardable. You can't hide a horse, ne yet cart wheels, an' ye dussn't take horse an' cart on th' grass; that might stick. You come back to mine afore we go to yours, an' I'll show ye".

Mr. Mole's cottage holding has two useful outhouses, one with a bench, for he is clever with his hands. Mr. Mole showed Mr. Woodpecker in the further outhouse two rubber tyres fitted to replace the wheels of a hand cart that stood outside.

"There's a many knows me hand cart," explained Mr. Mole, "and she got heavy owd wheels to her; you don't wanter push her far. But time I've changed 'em, she kin run wunnderful light. I kin do it under ten minits, too." Mr. Woodpecker heaved a vast sigh of admiration and content, and the two friends proceeded to talk in wisest fashion about plans by which they would punish certain "poachin' varmints" and win due reward without appeal to the authorities.

"The owd moon'll be on her back," said Mr. Mole.

Complete Story by S. L. Bensusan

They spent two hours waiting under the hedge until the long-expected cart arrived

"She on't git up afore one in the mornin'."

"Th' Lord send a fine day an' not too much wind," observed Mr. Woodpecker piously, as they reached the cottage and changed the subject. Mrs. Woodpecker had not made dripping toast willingly, but she had not forgotten the capacity of her husband and guest.

"If I got a wife," said Mr. Tod Mole, "I'd want she should be able to make sech toast."

The *Market Waldron Intelligencer* remarked in its Society columns that Sir Thomas and Lady Skinner were entertaining a large and distinguished party for cover shooting; it gave all the names that look best in print and might be held to justify the qualifying adjective, it even spelt most of them correctly.

Monday broke mistily, but one light helps another; Sir Thomas Skinner shines in the county and the sun felt bound to do the same, lest it be eclipsed. There were eight guns, over and above the four members of the syndicate, some of the surest in the county among them.

All went merry as a marriage bell. Birds came well over the chosen stands, the lunch served in the large Tithe Barn was excellent, the final drive brought birds flying back high to their home wood. The party moved housewards in high spirits, pausing awhile on the terrace to look at the long lines of the slain, upwards of four hundred pheasants and a score of other birds or beasts that had been so unfortunate as to cross the path of experts.

Meanwhile, certain keen intelligences gathered unseen and unheard round the Priory; with one of them, the young underkeeper—whose athletic form, easy bearing, and good looks had been remarked by the ladies of the house party—exchanged a few subdued words.

A hand cart with light motor wheels had moved noiselessly through the dusk to a little hollow under the hedge in a far field; there was a neat new pathway over the bank and on either side made up with quite a lot of brash and waste.

Mr. Woodpecker and Mr. Mole were in place under the hedge by eight o'clock; it must have been two hours later when the long-expected cart was heard approaching.

There were three men in charge. The listeners heard a heavy hamper dumped down and some sort of machine taken out of the cart.

"You don't want a light, Jim," said one speaker. "You kin git there in twenty minits an' be here by th' time we got th' owd cart back. Bring th' car as far as the gate, an' keep her lights out."

A motor-bicycle darted off a moment later; the cart followed in leisurely fashion.

"No time to lose," whispered Mr. Mole, before it had gone a hundred yards.

They moved forward. There stood the hamper; it was not heavy and they had it down the slope and on to the hand cart without delay. Mr. Mole moved on swiftly, Mr. Woodpecker only stayed to arrange the brushwood so that none would notice the newly made marks down the bank.

Then he strode along the road that Mr. Mole had taken, until his quick ear caught the sound of a car in the far distance.

He jumped down into the ditch and crouched, headlights swept the road; he glimpsed the passengers, policemen both. His heart sank.

A short cut across the fields, and just as he was within a few yards of his goal, he heard his friend's voice in the darkness.

"There's sornthin' amiss, Solomon; forever o' p'lice about, an' it ain't game we got in th' owd basket. Best git it inter me cellar."

"Sarten sure," agreed Mr. Woodpecker, not without agitation, for he knew that he was free from offence and convinced that it is the innocent who have most to fear from the police.

They carried the basket from hand cart to kitchen. Mr. Mole lifted the boards that make a trap-door. Mr. Woodpecker descended and received the burden, then the boards were replaced, the rug thrown over them, the hand cart taken to the outhouse and the wheels changed.

"I'm oneasy," admitted Mr. Mole from the midst of his labours, "that ain't pheasants in there."

"I don't like meself, meself," said Mr. Woodpecker. "I'll goo back to mine acrost th' fields afore the owd moon kin rise. That don't do to be seen slippin' about a night like this."

There was no sound save the hooting of owls, no car lamps shone on the high road. All was peace, save at Overshot Priory, where lights were working overtime and telephone bells were ringing and Sir Thomas Skinner was talking with great emphasis to a troubled company.

◆ ◆ ◆

Dreamless rest and the morning light restored Mr. Woodpecker's tranquillity; he had ploughed an acre of three-horse land by half-past two and was preparing to take "they harses" back to the yard when Mr. Mole appeared from behind the hedge.

"Rug 'em an' leave 'em a moment, Solomon," he whispered. "Come you down inter th' owd ditch. We're up agin a peck o' trouble." More than a little perplexed, his friend did as requested, and the poacher pulled a copy of the *Morning Trumpet* from his pocket. "Look you here," he said, and Mr. Woodpecker looked and read—under the heading "Stop Press" :—

"Burglary In County Mansion

"Overshot Priory, near Market Waldron, was broken into last evening while guests were at dinner. Much jewellery was stolen; four jewel cases are missing. The trouble was discovered shortly after nine o'clock, and within an hour the police were scouring the country. There is reason to believe that a farm cart was employed to take the spoil to the high road, where a motor-car, carrying no lights, picked it up."

"What we gotter do?" demanded Mr. Mole.

"We gotter git riddy o' th' owd hamper," declared Mr. Woodpecker with decision, after a moment's pause. "You gotter git th' owd han' cart gooin' on rubber agen, Tod, arter sundown, an' drop th' stuff inter a ditch or a pond. That'll be dark as dark to-night. You must goo by Mattick Lane an' Damson End to Cly Common. There's a big ditch there an' you won't meet a sowl. If so be you leave it there, you can't take no hu't. If you're afeard, I'll do ut f'r ye, but you kin goo lighter on y'r fet."

"I'll see to it, Solomon," said Mr. Mole. "I kin see in th' dark an' hear, too, f'r that matter."

"Come to mine arter, if so be you can; I'll be oneasy till I know everything's all right," said his friend, and late that night Mr. Mole reported the safe dumping of the "owd hamper" into a deep ditch and took a cup of cocoa. Mrs. Woodpecker, who does not read newspapers, had gone to bed.

A week later the *Morning Trumpet* had a paragraph that interested all marshland.

"The Burglary at Overshot Priory

"Sir Thomas Skinner's generous offer of a reward of twenty pounds for information leading to the recovery of the property stolen from his guests was claimed yesterday.

"A young man named Edward Mole, living in the village of Little Mudford, was walking along a lonely common some two miles from home when he saw something unusual in a ditch. Close examination revealed a large wicker basket. He summoned friends to keep an eye on the spot while he bicycled to Market Waldron and told the police. They sent down at once, and with great difficulty raised the basket from the mud and water that had left but little of it visible.

"At Market Waldron Police Station, Sir Thomas and Lady Skinner, hastily summoned, identified the contents of the basket. Lady Skinner passed some scathing comment on the lack of initiative shown by the local constabulary, remarks to which we understand exception was taken.

"The fashion in which burglars gained access to the house, how the valuables were removed, the manner in which they were taken to a desolate common and left there, are questions that baffle not only the local and county police, but Scotland Yard itself.

"The general belief now entertained is that the burglars must have been driving their spoil away to meet the motor-car seen moving without lights on the high road, when they were surprised and compelled to abandon them.

"No cart-wheel tracks are visible near the ditch, though it is believed that a cart was used, but unfortunately before the experts could take charge the story of the discovery had leaked out. Residents in large numbers had visited the place, and traces, if any, were obliterated. Owing to this, the police are deprived of what might have been valuable clues."

"That's a piece," remarked Mr. Mole on the great occasion of the sharing out which took place in the shed that houses the hand cart and its two sets of wheels. "How them p'lice will goo interferin'. They ha'n't lost no wheel tracks; they never found none. That's some lucky you went along o' they 'residents in large numbers,' Solomon."

"That ain't large numbers they wanted," said Mr. Woodpecker complacently, "that wore large feet. What I dedn't stomp out comin', I stomped out gooin', near as I could. Nex' day I went to have another look in me dinner time when there worn't a sowl about, an' th' day arter somebody towd me they got a p'liceman hangin' round, so I never. But I hadn't left a great deal f'r anybody to see, though I sez it. We bin an' shared lucky, mate," he concluded. "I'm a gooin' to keep three an' bury sivin in a box."

"I'm a gooin' to bury nine o' mine," said Mr. Mole. "If you got a poun' in y'r pocket, you kin keep it there; if you got five you spend one or two, an' don't feel th' miss on 'em. An' you never know when you'll be glad of a extry poun' or two in this here world."

"That's a true word," admitted Mr. Woodpecker. "Money ain't no use to ye if ye spend it. Happen I'll bury th' lot. Time a man come into a bit o' extry onexpected like," he added thoughtfully, "there's for ever o' thing his wife can't wait for no longer."

NEXT WEEK:

- Transoceanic air liners are burning desert islands into air bases of the utmost importance; soon nations will be bickering over tiny coral strands that hitherto have been ignored by even coasting steamers. Read the fascinating story of these

HALF-WAY ISLANDS
as told by **Vincent Brome**

- Also there's an **A. J. Cronin** story and another **Savaran** adventure while **W. J. Passingham** introduces the "**Bulls and Bears of Capel Court**"

Dramas behind the SOS

by B. D. Freeston

"I WANT to broadcast an S O S message," says the voice on the telephone. "What must I do?" This question was first put to us in 1923 and has been repeated thousands of times. At that time, of course, there were no rules and regulations regarding such messages, and the first S O S message (what a sensation it caused!) was broadcast from the Birmingham station.

If someone wants to find a relative of a dying person we must have the following particulars before anything can be done :—

"What is the full name of the person you want to find? When and where was he or she last heard of? Is the patient asking to see this particular relative? Have all other means of communication failed? What is the name and address of the doctor in attendance? What is your name and address, and are you a relative?"

When all these questions are satisfactorily answered we must telephone to the doctor (or to the hospital) to confirm that the patient is *dangerously* ill and is asking to see the person for whom we have been asked to broadcast. This is absolutely essential. Often people ask that we should broadcast for somebody, yet when we have spoken to the doctor we have found that the patient is neither *dangerously* ill nor has he any wish to see his relatives.

Everything is so carefully checked that it would be almost impossible to perpetrate a hoax.

When calls are supposed to come from a hospital we always telephone back to ensure that the calls really did originate at the hospital in question, and the same procedure is adopted in the case of messages from the police.

When we receive a request to broadcast for the relatives of a patient in hospital, we are often told by the authorities that they do not know the name of the person wanted. And then it transpires that the man is dying and that the hospital authorities want to find someone to be responsible for the funeral arrangements. We cannot, of course, give assistance in such cases.

The programmes would be overwhelmed if we accepted even half the requests we receive in a year; listeners would soon be tired of hearing about other people's lost umbrellas, domestic problems, and troublesome pets. Last year we received more than 5,000 applications for broadcast messages.

We stopped broadcasting messages for missing persons (other than those wanted in connection with dangerous illness) in 1933 because of the small number of successes. But we still make these appeals in cases of crime or for witnesses of accidents at the request of the police. These messages come to us direct from Scotland Yard and are typed on special forms.

Mr. Freeston at work in his office in Broadcasting House, deciding the fate of applications to broadcast S O S messages

The best time for broadcasting S O S messages is either with the first news bulletin at 6 p.m. or with the second news at 9.30 p.m., but in cases of great urgency (generally when someone has met with an accident and the immediate attendance of relatives is imperative) such messages are broadcast during the first break in the programme. Messages for members of the crews of trawlers are put out when possible with the shipping forecasts.

We broadcast a large number of messages for men in trawlers that are not equipped with normal wireless installation. You may have noticed that such messages are worded differently from those for people on land. We never ask a trawler to return to port. We just say, "Please inform John Brown, deck hand on board the steam trawler *Ocean Star* No. A.B. 123, at present fishing in the North Sea, that his wife, Mary Brown, is dangerously ill in the Grimsby Hospital." We naturally have to leave it for the skipper to decide whether he will bring his ship to port or not.

Often we are asked to find people who have been out of touch with their relatives for as long as twenty-five years and are believed to be in some far-distant part of the world, but we do not broadcast to distant countries such as Australia nor do we broadcast for persons who have been out of touch with their relatives for more than a certain period. You see, we have had thirteen years' experience of all kinds of S O S messages and our statistics are carefully analysed. We must confine ourselves to the type of message that has a reasonable chance of success.

Although the S O S service is entirely free to listeners, and although it often involves us in long trunk calls or telegrams—to say nothing of the amount of time given—not more than one person in ten writes to tell us what happened. We wish they all would. At the end of each month, we send cards to those for whom we've broadcast messages, asking them to let us know whether they have been successful or not; but, even then, some people don't bother to let us know.

Occasionally, someone telephones to say he is the wanted man, asking for confirmation of the message —but only occasionally. During the early part of each morning we invariably receive a number of 'phone calls from people who have only heard the S O S with a casual ear (perhaps while talking) and afterwards think that it might have been for a friend. They are usually wrong! What panic we might spread among the Smiths, Jones, and Robinsons if we did not insist on having adequate christian names before we broadcast.

Many people look on the B.B.C. as a "Lost and Found" Bureau. We have been asked to broadcast for lost husbands, children, dogs, birds, jewellery, luggage, musical instruments left in trains, poisons, either lost or stolen, explosives, patients who have left hospitals and then been discovered to be suffering from some very contagious disease, and on more than one occasion for escaped lunatics.

Although the majority of people write and telephone to us, many call at Broadcasting House. Some are in real distress because somebody near to them is dying and they want to find some relative with whom they have not been able to get in touch. It has always surprised me to find what tremendous numbers of children fail to keep in touch with their parents.

Once a man wrote a most libellous letter to us, giving the name of his "bookie" and asking us to broadcast that he was a cheat and to tell everyone not to bet with him as he had not paid up.

Many years ago we received a letter signed "Lonely Lady," asking us to find the writer a husband. It contained the words, "I am a Christian woman and just yearn to meet a nice lonely gentleman!" I think this must have been the first time we were asked to act as a matrimonial agency.

Here is another amusing letter we had from an indignant listener some time ago :—

"Will you please put on the wireless for Mrs. ——— who has had her dog poisoned by some persons who as thrown it over the yard. She as never been loose. Hoping the people of ——— will look after there pets, I reman ———."

Another thing that has always amazed me is the number of doctors who leave dangerous drugs unattended in their cars. Already this year we have broadcast nine messages of this kind. These come under the heading of "Special Messages" and all kinds of things fall in this category. Glancing through the records for this year I notice the following: "Drugs missing from Edinburgh," "Gelignite missing from a store," "Plate-layer struck by open railway carriage door," "A man found unconscious," a "Request for Bacillus Pfeiffer to save the life of a child" (this appeal had an enormous response), and "A half-pint bottle of hydrofluoric acid lost in the street in Manchester."

These are just some of the cases in which we have tried to help the public. Perhaps the most sensational of this type of message was one broadcast many years ago. A chemist telephoned to say that he had given a customer a bottle of poison instead of some medicine that the doctor had ordered! Fortunately, the woman was traced before she had taken it; but I should not like to have been that chemist.

More than a thousand S O S and police messages were broadcast during 1935. During the first three months of this year we broadcast 275, of which 167 have been successful, 96 unsuccessful, and the results of 12 are unknown.

Many people do not appear to realise that there is absolutely no charge for broadcasting an S O S message and so we are frequently asked the price or offered a fee within the means of the applicant. Some of the letters are pathetic—for instance: "I am only a poor woman and have nothing but the old-age pension, but I will gladly pay what I can if you will help me." How glad we are to help those people.

Well, you have heard the tragic and the gay side of the work connected with S O S messages and, although I hope the occasion will not arise in your life, should you have to ask for a message to be broadcast for any of your relatives you may perhaps know how to go about it and avoid some of the pitfalls I have described.

I have shown you why we must have rules and regulations, but this does not mean that we need have hard hearts, and I assure you that it is often far more difficult to refuse to help in some of these human tragedies than it would be to give way. Our wish is to keep the number of S O S messages down for the sake of the programmes as a whole, but still by confining our service to essential and successful messages to be able to bring relief to the sick and dying and assist in the detection of serious crime.

Laughter

The "PASSING SHOW" Smile Section

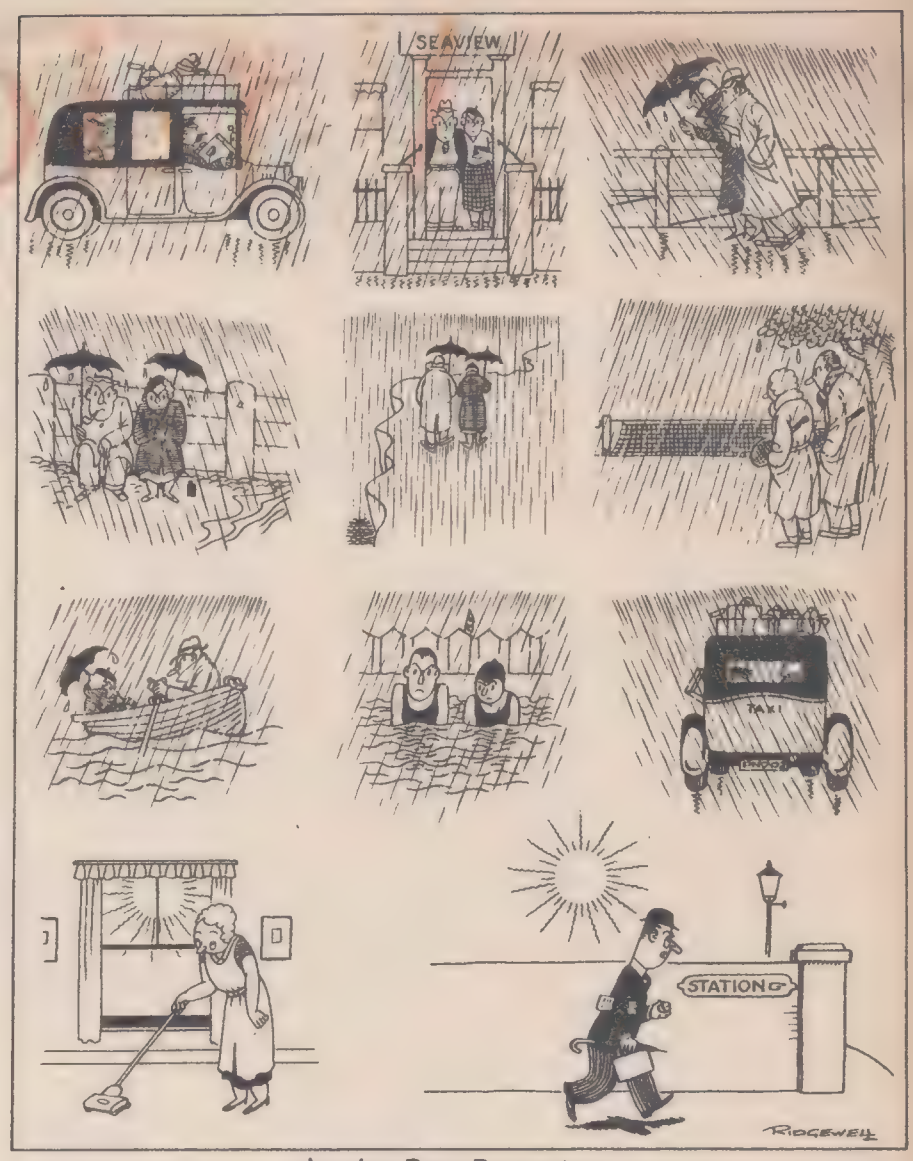
"Hallo—the strong man come home drunk again."

Announcer : "Tune in at this time next week and Professor Mesmero will tell you how to bring your subject down again."

"Do you mind if mother comes and stays with us for a time, dear ?"

"He has to have a copy ; he can't spell."

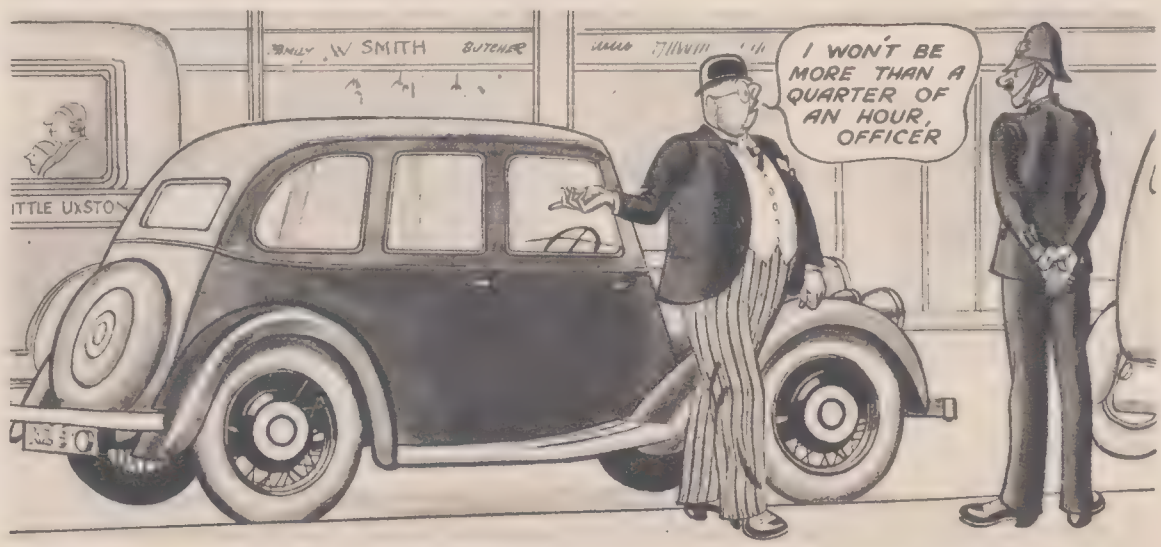
"Take a letter to the Mid-Air Transport Company!"

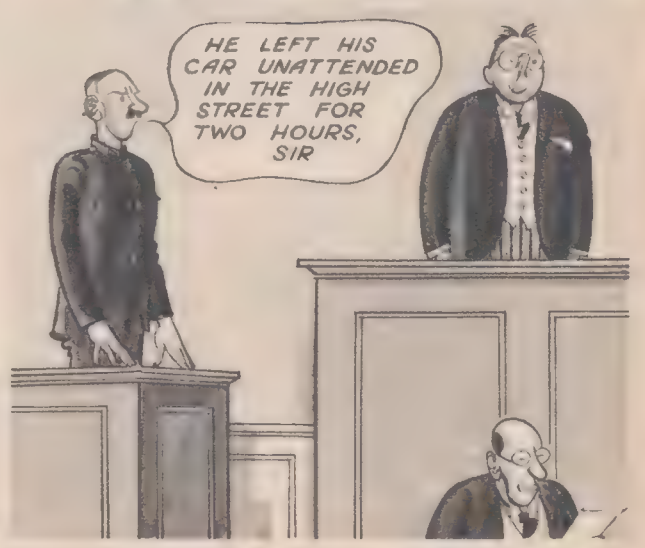


Another Deep Depression.

A MAN AND AN OBSTRUCTION

By A. C. BARRETT





"No—it makes me dizzy if I bend down."

"We must change this Peace Pipe tobacco, chief—it's just started a war."

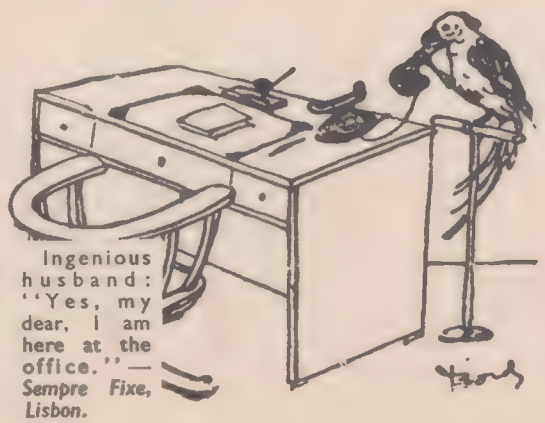
"Well, you see, we couldn't get a photograph of him."

"Gosh! I do look bad."

"We should have arrived earlier, but we were playing bridge and I held four aces."
—*San Francisco Chronicle.*

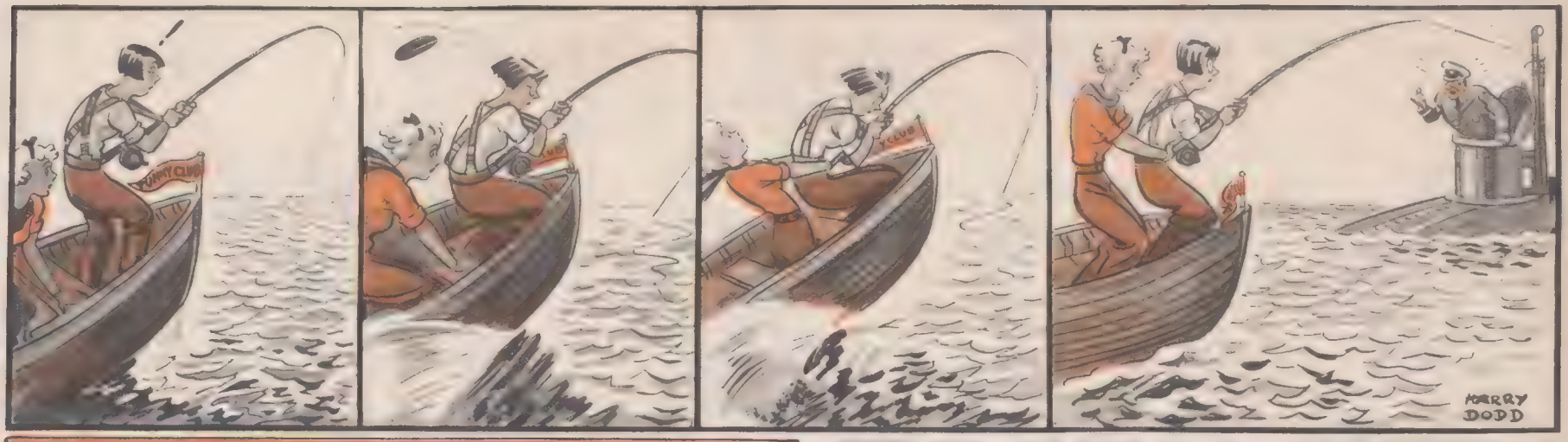
LAUGH WITH THE WORLD

"Your profession?"
"Wireless announcer."
"Your age?"
"At the third stroke of the clock I shall be 42 years 5 months 17 days 15 hours and 18 minutes."
—*Das Illustrierte Blatt*, Frankfurt.



Ingenious husband: "Yes, my dear, I am here at the office."—*Sempre Fixe, Lisbon.*

PURL and PLAIN

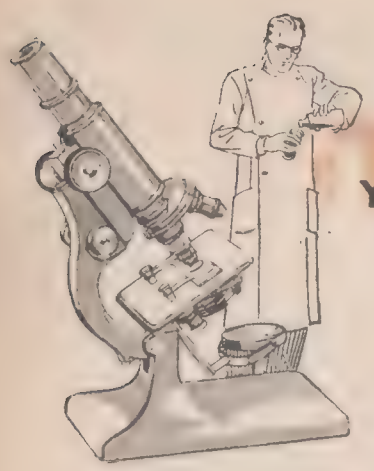


String around your finger
Tied up in a knot,
May make you remember
Somefing you've forgot!

"I must say, foreman, this new hut they've made me is a great improvement on the old one."

OLD BILL

by BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER



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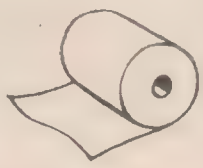

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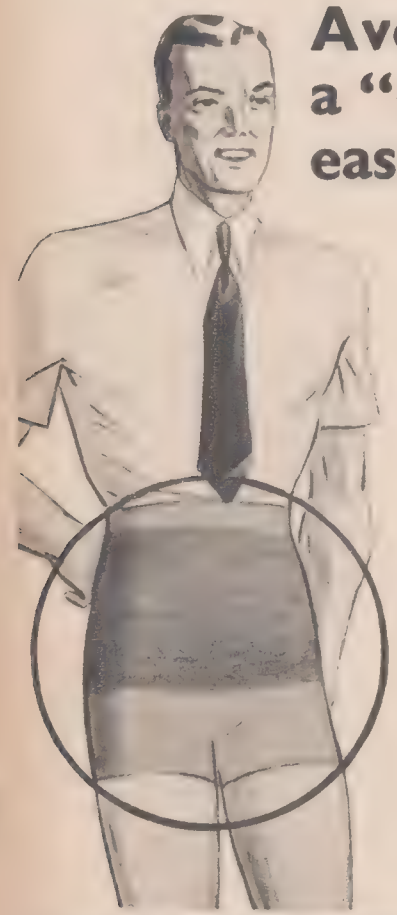

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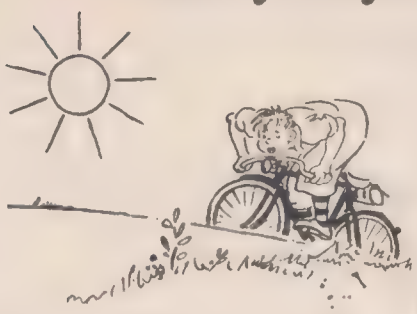
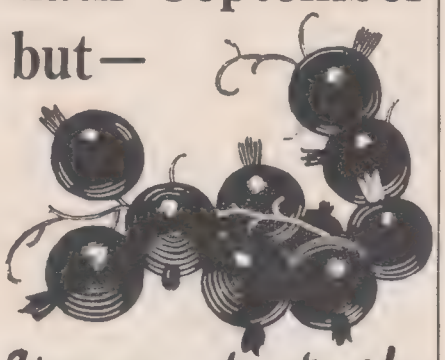


hath September but—



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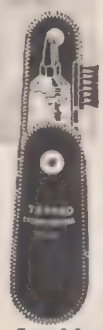

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Continuing THE LEGACY MURDERS *by* FRANCIS BEEDING

A figure in a dark suit slipped quickly and furtively into the room.

ILLUSTRATED BY JACK M. FAULKS

SETTING *the* TRAP

READ THIS FIRST

Valerie Beauchamp, best seller novelist, is murdered four days after her discovery that she has been hoaxed by members of a literary society, the Esoterics, into believing one of her readers has fallen in love with her. Her will shows that she left £200 a year to each of them. If any of them dies, his income is to be shared by the others. Then starts a reign of terror. Of the six members of the Esoterics, Adelaide Tring is poisoned, Frederick Reeves is shot, and Councillor Stanton is stabbed, while the others—Naomi Garnett, Cyril Sidebotham, and Edward Calcott—are watched by Scotland Yard. Eventually, Calcott is brought to trial, accused of committing the murders. The jury disagrees and, when the judge orders a re-trial, Inspector Martin receives a letter indicating where he can find further evidence to convict Calcott. He decides that his mysterious correspondent is the murderer and starts preparing a trap, arranging for Calcott to "escape" from prison

MR. STEPHEN JENKS, ace crime reporter, sat at his desk with the green lampshade shining on a white sheet of paper in the typewriter in front of him. He did not notice the noise. He had grown too used to it for it to interfere with his thoughts, and his fingers began to play an efficient tattoo on the keys.

This was a good story—front page stuff. But would the new cook at Calcott's home be as good as her word? She seemed a businesslike person, though there had been a flicker of surprise when Jenks had handed her a ten-shilling note with a request that any other reporter, if he should call, should, if possible, be kept in ignorance.

The *Daily Wire* had been first with the escape. It was now going to be first with the motive that lay behind it.

The cook at 255 High Street had not been very communicative, but the trained nurse, waylaid by Jenks on the stairs, had been as bright and snappy as he could wish. Mrs. Calcott was ill. Her condition was grave. Her son, locked up in Brixton, had been informed, and now he had escaped. Yes, Edward Calcott was devoted to his mother. No, the authorities had not allowed him to visit her. Yes, Edward Calcott had petitioned the Governor to release him for the purpose—under guard, of course. No, there had as yet been no indication that Calcott would come to Highwood, but the police were waiting for him to do so. Yes, Mrs. Calcott was suffering from pleurisy and Dr Reeves was in attendance.

Outside the house Jenks had debated whether he should try and see Dr. Reeves. Reeves, he reflected, was the father of one of the victims and was now looking after the mother of the man who had been accused of murdering his son—a remarkable situation! But there was no real need to interview the doctor. The facts were good enough and speed was essential.

His fingers danced over the keyboard. Presently he finished and, pulling out the sheets, began to read them hastily over, regardless of the clacking of the other typewriters and the bull-like voice of Thornby—one of his colleagues—yelling down a telephone six feet away.

"*Triple Murder Sensation.*
"*Further Light on Calcott's Escape.*
"*Prisoner's Request to see Sick Mother.*
"*From the Special Correspondent of the Daily Wire.*

"Why did Edward Calcott escape from Black Maria? That, surely, must be the question in the minds and on the lips of thousands of our readers to-day. He could not have hoped to escape recapture by the police—even though he counted on that inefficiency which has all along characterised their conduct of the case.

"Technically, Edward Calcott was an innocent man awaiting trial upon evidence which a British jury had considered to be inadequate to justify a conviction. His best course was obviously to abide his trial, and it must be evident to any thoughtful person that he must have had an overwhelming motive for a step attended with so little hope of success and which must inevitably increase the dark suspicion under which he lies.

"Why, then, did he break away in the dramatic circumstances described in yesterday's issue of the *Daily Wire*? I think I can supply the answer to that question, and it is one which strikes a human note to which no one can remain indifferent. Edward Calcott has always been a most devoted son. Readers who followed his late trial will remember that Sir Henry Grey, his counsel, on more than one occasion, laid special emphasis on this pleasing trait in his nature.

(*continued on page* 32)

Harvest-time at the Breakfast-Table

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Continuing The Legacy Murders

"It was indeed—so Counsel for the Defence stated—largely not to hurt his mother's feelings that Edward Calcott took that room in Baffin's Court under the name of Arthur Scott-Digby, about which our readers have heard so much. His state of mind can therefore be easily imagined when he learned two days ago that his mother, whom he loves best in the world, lay dangerously ill at her home at 255 High Street, Highwood.

"When I called there to-day the white-capped nurse informed me in the brisk, efficient manner of her calling that, following a cold caught during the trial, pleurisy had made its dreaded appearance, and it was as I was leaving the house that a car drew up from which sprung no less a person than Dr. Reeves. I had no time to speak to him. Nor would I have ventured to intrude at that poignant moment, upon one who, devoted to his mission of healing and inspired by the scientific spirit which knows neither friend nor enemy, but only fellow creatures in need of its impersonal ministry, was speeding on his way to attend the woman whose son has been accused of murdering his own.

"Where is that son to-day? The police make no secret of their ignorance except to cover it with a vague statement to the effect that they believe him to be in the neighbourhood of his home and haunting the scenes of the crimes which have been laid to his account. To me, however, wherever he may be, his motive for breaking prison is clear and evident. I understand from inquiries made at Brixton that the authorities refused . . ."

Jenks paused a moment and then, deleting the last word, substituted "felt unable."

". . . that the authorities felt unable to grant the request made by the prisoner and his legal advisers that he should be released temporarily, on bail and under custody, in order to visit his mother. It is not for us to question their decision. Doubtless they felt that, with such grave charges still hanging over the prisoner, it would not be possible to relax the rules in any way in his case.

"Consider, however, his state of mind. He determined that, if the law would not help him, he must take the law into his own hands. How he did so was fully revealed in these columns yesterday.

"Now I must imagine him lying somewhere hidden, but watching and waiting for his opportunity to slip into that house and up those narrow stairs to kneel by the bedside of the woman who has meant so much to him throughout his life. That he has not yet been to the house I am in a position positively to confirm. I have also to confirm—alas, that it should be so—that the house is under constant observation by the police, and to me they made no secret of the fact that they were waiting there to lay their hands on him.

"May he come silently, like a thief in the night, and may he be allowed just those five minutes for which he craves by that stricken bed before he is dragged back to wait in Brixton until the next assizes will be the wish of everyone in whom the fundamental instincts of humanity find a responsive echo."

As Jenks read the last words a hand shot over his shoulder and snatched at the sheets.

"Here, Tommy . . ." Jenks began.

"Sorry," grinned the messenger, "but the chief is waiting for this. You bet he is."

The boy dashed away to the cubicle of the News Editor as Jenks sat back in the full glow of accomplishment and lit a cigarette.

Naomi finished her second cup of afternoon tea. The sun was streaming in through the open windows and she was alone in the drawing-room. The Canon and her mother were both out—her father at a vestry meeting and her mother "visiting."

She was grateful for their absence. Their demeanour towards her since the end of the trial—an exasperating blend of sympathy and reprobation—was at times almost more than she could bear.

Now, too, more than ever, she desired to be alone with her thoughts. Edward had escaped. The whole of England was ringing with the news, and the papers that morning had reported him to be still at large. Edward had broken prison, and he had done so—if the *Daily Wire* was to be believed—because the authorities had refused him permission to see his mother.

Naomi had herself tried to see Mrs. Calcott. Several times that day she had telephoned, but to no purpose. Mrs. Calcott, she was informed, was suddenly very ill. Dr. Reeves was calling twice a day and another man from Harley Street had been consulted.

Naomi's eyes went again towards the evening papers strewn upon the rug in front of her. She could not help it. She must read everything she could get concerning Edward and mostly, now, it was good reading, even though it shocked and humiliated her to see the headlines and follow the intimate details and conjectures with which the newspapers supplemented their small supplies of authentic information.

There was not the slightest doubt about it, public opinion was turning markedly in favour of Edward. She picked up again an early edition of the *Night Herald*. Edward was still news and it was splashed all over the front page.

"The purpose for which Edward Calcott escaped—if we are to accept the theory put forward by one of our contemporaries—has not yet been fulfilled. He has not yet made any overt attempt to visit 255 High Street, Highwood," where his mother lies so dangerously ill. That sooner or later he will do so is apparently the theory at New Scotland Yard, for the house is under observation day and night."

Naomi flung down the newspaper.

Edward would never be so mad as to go near his mother. He must know that the police would catch him at once if he did. But where could he be, and how did he contrive to remain hidden, with his face so well known to the public through a hundred photographs?

Naomi got up and began to walk up and down the room. Could she not try to help Edward? How could she get in touch with him? Could it be done through the agony column of *The Times*? She began in her mind to compose a cryptic message which only he would be able to understand. It might start with some quotation from the Bible, something apposite from the story of Ruth and Naomi. But it was ridiculous to try and compose things like that.

She started from her meditations. Something was tapping upon the window-pane. The holland blind was not firmly rolled up and the wooden acorn at the end of the blind-cord was hanging loose. It was always giving trouble and Ada the housemaid was very careless about it. Her father would certainly refer to it when he came home that night. She moved to the window to set it straight.

But no, it was not the acorn that tapped. It was the nail of the first finger of a hand protruding from a dark sleeve, and, even as she watched, the hand gripped the edge of the half-open french window and pulled it rapidly outwards.

A figure in a dark suit slipped quickly and furtively into the room.

It was Edward, with his eyes shining and his hands outstretched.

In a moment she was in his arms. She could not speak. She could ask him nothing, not till he had released her; and already the room was wavering. Was she going to faint?

"Naomi, how white you are. I'm sorry to have given you such a fright."

Somehow she was sitting on the chesterfield and Edward was kissing her hands.

She sat up violently.

"Edward, what are you doing here? You will be seen. Ada will be coming in a moment to take away the tea things."

Where could she conceal him? Her mind was racing. In the cellar? In the attic? Perhaps in her own room?

But Edward stood there smiling. He had caught one of her hands again and was pulling her towards him.

He sat down with her again on the chesterfield.

"Edward, you are mad."

"Deliciously mad."

"Where am I going to hide you?"

"That will not be difficult."

"But the police may call at any moment."

"Hide me, you must, but not from the police, Naomi. The police are my very dear friends. They brought me here in a nice car and decanted me most considerately in your road, so that I might struggle

through the gap in your father's hedge."

"Then your escape——"

Edward pulled her close.

"A device. Scotland Yard's white-headed boy has been giving his mind to the subject."

Naomi sat back and stared at him. Happiness was breaking in, but she held it away from her till the small hope might grow to a certainty.

"Then they no longer believe you to be guilty?"

She could not recognise her own voice.

He took her hands.

"Listen, Naomi, while I tell you about it."

Briefly, but not without excursions, he informed her of the receipt by Inspector Martin of the anonymous letter, its effect upon the authorities and the arrangements made by Martin for his escape.

"So here I am," he concluded, "and here I remain. Inspector Martin wants me to lie up, and as few people as possible must know about it—no one, in fact, outside the family and staff."

Naomi considered a moment.

"Ada had better be told. I can rely on her to hold her tongue. But not the cook. She's new and not to be trusted with information."

"Then you'd better put me away somewhere without loss of time."

"But Edward, what is the idea? I haven't grasped it yet."

"Safety first. I'll explain later."

Naomi got to her feet. This was not real. She stood a moment looking at Edward.

"Stay here," she said suddenly. "I'll go and see if the coast is clear."

She opened the door of the drawing-room. Distant sounds from the kitchen denoted that the cook was preparing the dinner. Ada was nowhere visible. She turned back to Edward.

"Don't make a noise," she said.

She took him by the hand and together they sped upstairs.

"Where are we going?" demanded Edward.

"Attic," said Naomi briefly.

A moment later, safely in the attic with the door shut, Edward sat down on a huge Victorian leather trunk, the pride of the Canon's youth.

"Now," Naomi said, as he drew her down beside him, "tell me what it means."

"Isn't this good enough?" he whispered.

She leaned away from him.

"But I want to know what it means," she persisted. "What does Inspector Martin expect to gain by all this?"

"He thinks that the man who planted all that evidence against me will make an attempt to get in touch with you now that he knows that I have escaped."

"Get in touch?"

Edward's grip upon her tightened.

"Don't be afraid, Naomi. You've been under observation ever since the news of my escape was published."

"I'm not afraid, but I want to know exactly what to expect."

"We don't know what to expect—except that this unknown person will probably try to lay another murder at my door before I am taken back to Brixton. That is the position. We are simply to wait and report at once to the police if any attempt is made to approach you—more especially if it should come from 'Avilion.' Lavinia Brown is not the person who murdered Valerie Beauchamp but she may very possibly be a confederate. That is one possibility. There is another thing that we have to consider ——"

Naomi sprang to her feet.

"Edward," she interrupted, "there is one thing we have completely forgotten. It just shows how all to pieces we are."

"What is it, Naomi?"

"Your mother. You must see her at once."

Edward also rose from the trunk and laughed aloud.

"My mother," he said, "that's all part of the show. The police had to create an impression that I should make for this part of London. Hence my poor mother had to be taken ill."

"But the trained nurse and Dr. Reeves?"

"They also are part of the show. Scotland Yard, when it likes, is very active and sagacious."

"I can't take it in—not all at once. What was this other thing that we have to consider?"

"If an attempt is made to get in touch with you, my dear, you may have to admit that you are in correspondence with me or know that I am conveniently near at hand. Remember that officially I have escaped from prison, and that I am in hiding from the police. The suggestion is that you should confess that I am here at the vicarage. I am supposed to have rung you up from a call-office on getting clear. I then took refuge in a deserted house in the neighbourhood of Euston. You came to me there and brought me a disguise in which I came hither by night to get news of my mother and to visit her as soon as the coast was clear. You warned me, however . . ."

He broke off. Somewhere down below a bell was shrilling.

"That's the telephone," said Naomi. "Ada will be looking for me. I must go down."

"One moment," he pleaded, and took her in his arms.

The bell was still ringing.

"Edward, darling, I really must go."

Naomi slipped from the room and ran down into the hall. Ada was at the telephone.

"One moment, madam," she was saying. "Miss Garnett is coming down."

Naomi took the receiver from Ada.

"Who is it?" she whispered.

"Miss Lavinia Brown, miss. She wishes to speak to you urgently."

"Now, George," protested Crosby, perhaps you'll tell me what we are supposed to be doing."

Inspector Martin sat silent a moment, staring straight ahead of him, as the police car turned swiftly out of the Yard into Whitehall. Then he turned eagerly to Crosby.

"Well, Jim," he said, "it's come at last."

"What has come?"

"An attempt to get into touch with Miss Garnett and it's come from 'Avilion.' I had a call from Miss Garnett ten minutes ago. Lavinia Brown began by saying that she had been *changed*."

"Changed? What on earth do you mean?"

"It's a technical expression, Jim, indicating a sort of sudden conversion. It seems that her dead friend, Valerie Beauchamp, appeared to her in a vision last night and told her that she must no longer harbour thoughts of vengeance. So now she wishes to make amends and do all she can to help the unfortunate. She had, in particular, been moved to ring up Miss Garnett and inquire whether she knew anything of the whereabouts of the poor, hunted fugitive from justice."

"Calcott?"

"The same. Lavinia Brown was sure that Miss Garnett, if anyone, would know where he was to be found."

"And then?"

"She went on to say that if poor Edward, who had suffered so much, needed a refuge, and if Miss Garnett could bring him to the house, he would be assured of a warm welcome and a secure hiding-place in 'Avilion.' Miss Garnett then rang off."

"Did Miss Garnett admit that Calcott was at the vicarage?"

"Of course she did no such thing. She telephoned to me."

There was a moment's silence, broken by Crosby.

"Well, George, is this the fatal move?"

Martin gazed steadily in front of him. Was this really the moment for which he had been waiting sleeplessly for the last twenty-four hours?

Lavinia Brown had not killed Valerie Beauchamp. Nor had she killed Stanton—being then safely secluded in her home of rest. But it began to look as though she might well be in touch with the criminal. If that were so, the wild scheme he had imposed on his superior officers would be justified and the murderer might soon be under arrest.

"I thought first," he continued aloud to Crosby, "of allowing Calcott and Miss Garnett to go themselves to 'Avilion'—under protection. But the risk would be too great. The protection, if the murderer is to be drawn into the open, would have to be unobtrusive and it might not be effective."

"Then what exactly are we going to do?"

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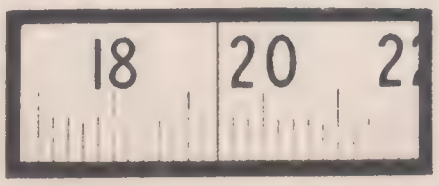

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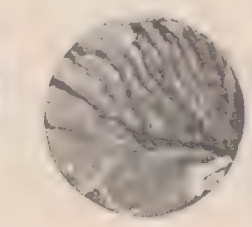

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Compare this with the illustration on the left.

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• Woman to Woman

by Naomi Mitchison

TWO-WAY

I'M going to have a room of my own to work in this autumn. We're going to build it at the bottom of the garden, where the greenhouse is now. You know the kind of London greenhouse at the back of a London garden, which has long ceased to function and is now piled up with an incredible variety of mess and muddle, dolls' prams and railway engines and garden forks that one is meaning to put a new handle on some day. Well, that's going and my room is coming !

I've never had a room of my own to work in—that room of one's own that Virginia Woolf once told us we women had got to have so as to be free. I used to think I didn't need it and hadn't earned or deserved it; when I wanted it, I couldn't help thinking about the families living eight or ten in one room or two, and the mothers of those families who try to keep up a standard of decency and cleanliness against almost impossible odds.

These are the women I respect—much more than I respect any of my successful fellow-novelists. And I think of them now. My only excuse for this room of my own is that it is now becoming a necessary instrument to enable me to work; I can't manage without it any longer.

When I first started writing (in default of doing science which seemed impossible for a married woman without so much as a degree), I managed to fit it in quite well with the domesticities. And I think anyone who really has the passion for story-telling that I had, can do the same thing.

Most of my first book was written while pram-pushing, with a notebook balanced over the handles, the pencilled story interrupted here and there with square brackets and : *Speak greengrocer about lettuce* or *Mend nursery fire-guard*. I used to pram-push in Battersea Park and Chelsea Hospital gardens with my mind full of pictures of Gauls and Romans, scribbling away against time as long as the child was asleep, because a baby awake and full of beans rather resents a parent who isn't paying attention. In fact he is extremely apt to grab the notebook and push it out of his pram !

As the children grew up, it got more difficult; there weren't the same nice long intervals when they were asleep. But the same violent urge of story-telling carried me on, so that it took more than two babies playing trains to stop me writing a book. The *Corn King and the Spring Queen* took me five years to write and overlapped three babies; I finished it a couple of months before the third was born.

I remember very well writing the last page, with a two year old and a four year old building a tower against my desk.

As I wrote the last word, crash !—down came the tower. But all the same, if I'd had no help with the children and no nursery for even part of the time, I don't know how I should have managed.

Besides, I don't think it's very good for children to be with their mothers absolutely all the time; it's wearing for both, unless the mother is a complete intellectual cabbage herself and is capable of living in babyland all the time—and then she is no good to them when they are growing up.

Again, I am so bad at sewing and knitting that obviously, on economic lines alone, it is more sensible for me to typewrite (which I do professionally well !) than to make my children's clothes. I'm quite sure that the many women who don't like sewing and are bad at it, should feel no sentimental compulsion to make babies' frocks themselves instead of doing something that they can do well.

It always seems to me that the routine of a small baby's existence, so long as both baby and mother are well, fits in admirably with writing, and one or two other women writers whom I know have said the same thing. There is feeding time when one must rest and can think—or read. Then there is a definite space of time before the next feed.

And one can't be called on to dash out suddenly, or to sit on committees or lunch with publishers or make speeches or do anything that will interrupt the routine of nursing. And equally, one must have a reasonable amount of sleep and one must have proper meals instead of biscuits and coffee !

Of course, there is always liable to be a crisis from time to time. Nobody can

SERVICE

For women readers by experts on all practical subjects—write to The Advice Service, " The Passing Show," 31, Bow Street, London, W.C.2.

"It is more sensible for me to typewrite—I am so bad at sewing and knitting."

CAREER

write well if they are anxious, or have been up all night with a sick child or a teething baby. Yet even a crisis—or even worse things—sharpen the mind and set it working. The writing comes later.

But the time comes when the children are adolescents. They can't ever be sent to the nursery or told to go off and play. They too want to work. They want to play the piano or, far worse, to find interesting foreign stations on the wireless. They even want to borrow one's typewriter! And there is no longer any definite bedtime for people who know far more mathematics or English history than one does oneself. . . .

Again, one gets more easily exhausted than one did fifteen years earlier; the pure urge for story-telling slows down and instead something else grows on one: the desire to find the exactly right word or phrase, to balance fine adjustments of phrase and meaning; one has to get deeper down, beyond the immediate picture-vision of early romancing to the ideas that lay behind them and gradually appear later on. And this cannot be done except alone.

Now this is not to say that I always enjoyed working in the middle of tumult! I used to escape in odd ways from the family. Railway journeys were good, and I've gone round and round the Inner Circle with notebook and pencil. Walking is good for ideas, though driving a car isn't, because one's perceptions are always sharply on edge and externalised, watching the road.

Music may be very good; one holiday when two families were staying by the sea with one big living-room between us, I used to work there while another of the party played Beethoven on the piano; I was doing a storm and whenever she stopped playing I shouted to her to go on or my storm would stop.

Yet I'm not sure whether it's even primarily the family that I hope to escape in my new room. There won't be a telephone there, and I shall be too far, at least I trust I shall be, to hear the telephone in the house. And when people turn up with good causes for me to help them with, I shall be OUT. I'm afraid, though, it won't be bomb-proof or gas-proof so if that particular interruption comes. . . .

What should a writer do? The world is in a bad way just now, and, unluckily for us, we know it, and we feel bound to do what we can to help. We must not run away too much from the good causes, we must allow ourselves to be used and tired out if by that we can help at all to make a better world. And we must put what gifts we have at the disposal of those causes and those ideas that we have made up our minds are good.

We must not run away from a sick and angry and hateful world, any more than we would run away from a sick, cross child.

We've just got to roll up our sleeves and clear our heads if possible, and do something practical. We can't allow ourselves to scuttle off to this room of our own. It will be, surely, for the time when we have done what we can for the sick child or the sick world. It will be there, with its kindly, full bookshelves, its friendly table and chair waiting for us. As long as we use it as a working place and not as a hiding place, it will be allowed.

I shall have to say that to myself, all the time, about this room of my own.

What is Your Signature Worth?

BY putting your signature to the Registration Forms for THE PASSING SHOW'S Great Free Family Insurance Gift you will be safeguarding yourself against many of the most common causes of accidents in everyday life. More than that—you will be protecting your wife and your children (over six years of age and under fifteen).

THE PASSING SHOW'S Insurance Gift provides no less than 37 generous benefits. It is impossible to give here the full range of benefits, but the scope of this insurance provides every registered reader with that feeling of security which contributes so much to happiness.

If you have not yet signed for safety, fill up the Registration Forms on page 3 at once.

Prove *at our expense* that Stork makes better cakes than any other fat

We don't want you to take our word for it; we want you to prove for yourself that Stork makes lighter, crisper and more delicious cakes than any other fat. That's why we are making this generous offer of a half pound of Stork free for testing. You will find that Stork makes all your cooking taste much nicer and look more appetising. Stork's so easy to work with too, and it gives extra nourishment and goodness to everything you cook with it. Get your free ½ lb. of Stork and use it next time you bake.

FREE
half pound packet of
STORK

To get your free Stork simply fill in the coupon below and we will send you a free copy of the new Stork Cookery Book and *a voucher which entitles you to get ½ lb. of Stork from your regular grocer without any charge whatsoever*; also a convenient chart on which you can note down the results of your test.

Valuable Coupon

Please send me a free copy of the Stork Cookery Book (which contains REGULO MARKS for all baked dishes) and a voucher entitling me to obtain ½ lb. of Stork free from my regular grocer.

Name .....

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Fill in your name and address and send this coupon to Van den Berghs & Jurgens (Sales) Ltd., Dept. M.86, Unilever House, London, E.C.4, in an unsealed ½d-stamped envelope. Coupon valid only during 1936.

(PLEASE WRITE IN BLOCK LETTERS)

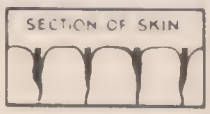
STORK
MARGARINE
contains sunshine vitamins

JS 890-364

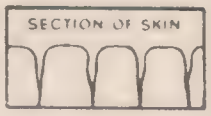
Dissolve away SUPERFLUOUS HAIR...

... at the ROOTS

The razor cuts off hair at the level of the skin—leaves coarse hair ends which grow back thicker and faster.

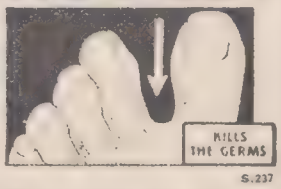


This new toilet cream dissolves the keratin in the hair and its roots. Removes hair *below* the skin surface. Leaves no stubble—no coarse re-growth.



An amazing new discovery by a celebrated chemist. The hair simply falls away! No odour; no mess or bother. Simply spread the cream on the skin—wash off with water—every trace of hair is gone. Skin is left soft and velvety smooth, as if that ugly growth had never existed. The razor method is old-fashioned and dangerous. Nasty smelling pastes and powders completely out of date. The up-to-date *scientific* way is New Veet (new and improved formula). Get a tube to-day and end your superfluous hair troubles for ever. By exclusive arrangement with the manufacturers, every woman reader of this paper can now obtain a special package of NEW VEET ABSOLUTELY FREE. Send 3d. in stamps to cover cost of postage, packing and other expenses. Address: Dae Health Laboratories, Ltd. (Dept. 41L), Cunard Road, Acton, London, N.W.10.

ITCHING FEET AND TOES RELIEVED AT ONCE!



S.237

Never neglect itching between the toes with red, raw, cracked dead-white skin with tiny blisters—this condition may lead to more serious troubles. If not treated at once it may spread. Dr. Scholl's SOLVEX is a safe, effective treatment specially formulated for this prevalent skin complaint. It relieves the itching, prevents the spread of the disease, and kills the fungi that causes it. Soothing, healing, antiseptic. 3/- a jar from all Chemists, and Dr. Scholl's Depots.

Dr Scholl's Solvex

FREE FOOT SERVICE Step into any Dr. Scholl's Foot Comfort Service Depot and get FREE advice on your foot trouble. No matter what your foot ailment may be, there is an inexpensive Dr. Scholl's Remedy or Appliance to give relief.

Another Benn and Son Story

● Gone was his usual air of perky importance. His shoulders drooped pitifully.

"Come right in; nobody's going to eat you," said Amos.

THE *Driving* FORCE

MATT FRASER was the best salesman in the hat trade. He admitted it himself, frequently.

Short, bullet-headed and as round as he was high, he had bounced his way in and out of more jobs than any other traveller in the town.

Invariably, however, he managed to keep with the biggest houses, although, by sheer elimination, this could not continue for ever, for no firm which had enjoyed the benefits of Matt's super salesmanship would ever, under imaginable circumstances, be induced to repeat the experience. As Albert Leatherbottom succulently put it: "Fraser's a damn fine salesman. He sold me."

Which was why Andrew Bacon looked up in mild surprise when the strident clang of his showroom bell disclosed, in place of the eagerly awaited London buyer, the rotund figure of Matt Fraser.

Matt looked round the dowdy showroom with a disdainful eye; taking in swiftly the tastelessly trimmed models lurching drunkenly on their ill-arranged stands.

"Morning Mr. Bacon," he said crisply. "How's trade?"

"Not too good, Matt," said Andrew, trying to keep the surprise at this unwonted visit from his voice. "I've spent a lot of money on new shapes this season, but they are not getting picked up at all well. They're Paris models, too."

"Nothing wrong with the shapes," snapped Fraser. "The trouble is your designs. They're beneath contempt. Why on earth don't you get a new designer?"

"I've had Agnes Blount now for over twenty years," began the manufacturer, when his visitor interrupted him.

"I know." he said. "And you're frightened to give her the sack in case she cries. Well, all I can say is that if a woman designs stuff like you've got there, she deserves to cry. Look at Benn & Son. They had an old geyser who had grown up with the firm, and their trade was going to the dogs. Then young Phillip roped in a smart French filly and now they're refusing orders."

With a characteristic gesture Bacon passed a hand across his eyes. He was unused to facing facts, then: "By the way, what did you want to see me about?" he asked, more as a means of escape than from curiosity.

Before replying, Fraser took a cigarette from his case, lit it, and, first sweeping the corner of a counter clear of hats, cocked a plump leg over the vacant spot.

"The fact is, Mr. Bacon, I've left Claretons," he said, when he had made himself at home. "Old man Clareton and I had a disagreement and I walked out, and I did not leave the door open behind me." The speaker did not think it necessary to add that, for the tenth time in his career, he had anticipated the sack by about two seconds—an accomplishment which enabled him to boast that he had always resigned "of his own accord."

"Now," continued Matt, "I have a proposition to make to you Mr. Bacon." He sank his voice impressively.

Andrew, always ready to build marble-halled palaces on the fringe of an idea, listened eagerly while the traveller drew entrancing pictures of a future prosperity which almost equalled in magnificence those of Andrew's own secret, daily dreams.

The end of it was the drafting of an agreement that was about as grossly onesided an affair as had ever carried a revenue stamp. In it Fraser received a liberal salary, commission, expenses *ad lib*, a heavy share of the profits—if any; and the power of termination at his own discretion, but was relieved of all financial responsibility. No man in the trade other than Bacon would have looked at such a document twice, and it was only in a state of semi-hypnotism induced by the glib tongue of the salesman that he was induced to append his signature.

Andrew walked home that night enveloped in a rosy-coloured haze through which dimly flitted luxurious limousines, mayoralities, and . . . faintly distant, the possible acolade of knighthood. At last he was able to indulge his vice free from that irritating, subconscious undercurrent which had always hitherto edged his dreams with a demand for previous endeavour. A stronger hand had grasped the reins and Andrew's mind was at rest in the relinquishing of a responsibility he had never been born to carry.

New brooms sweep clean, and in this respect Fraser was a vacuum cleaner. Within a week he had turned Bacon's inside out and stood the result on its head. The old staff melted like snow in the sun, the half-hearted protests of the proprietor himself being waived airily aside, and in their places were installed a large number of the 'live wires' which the new manager-salesman had encountered on his journeyings from one factory to another. In the place of the old, admittedly incompetent designer, he engaged two, on the plea of 'what one could not do, the other would.' If peroxide and lipstick were any criterion, then both were top-notchers.

To all questions of expense he turned a deaf ear, his oft-repeated motto following on the lines of the late Edgar Wallace: "If your expenditure exceeds your income—increase your income." By the end of a fortnight Andrew could hardly recognise his own factory, and then, satisfied with his beginnings, Fraser decided to roll up his sleeves and really get to work.

His first essay in this direction was a trip to Paris, plus the prettiest of the designers and a fat roll of travelling expense money, for, as he told his still bewildered employer, designs were the life blood of the trade. Given the best and latest of these, and he, Fraser, would make the firm's order book look like a bookmaker's ledger on Derby Day.

He returned from the French capital,

(*continued on page* 38)

NO SOAP—NO BRUSH

SHAVEX

REVOLUTION IN SHAVING

Millions are now using SHAVEX all over the world. Beware of imitations.

THROW AWAY YOUR SOAP AND BRUSH AND USE THE UP-TO-DATE METHOD OF SHAVING which takes a quarter of the time. We guarantee that one can have a perfect shave in two minutes with SHAVEX.

SHAVEX is without doubt the most perfect way of Shaving that man can desire. What is more simple than just wetting the beard and smearing on a little Shavex—and then a perfect shave. Shavex contains Almond Oil, which is a fine skin food for the face. You shave in a quarter of the time that is taken by any other method and you rub the rest of the Shavex into the skin—this takes away the wrinkles and keeps the face in a perfect condition. The Shavex Cream makes the bristles of the beard stand up, when they are easily shaved with the razor. The ordinary creams and soaps flatten the beard and so it is impossible to get the perfect shave. If grass is lying down it is more difficult for the mower to cut than if it is standing up. It is the same with the beard and Shavex. SHAVEX gets between all the hairs and forces the beard to stand up and one can cut it so easily and get a perfect shave.

ASK YOUR CHEMIST WHEN ASKING FOR SHAVEX for a "Shavex" Super Blade. We guarantee it to be the longest lived blade in the world. It is a miracle of sharpness and the smoothest that one can use on the face. Made of Chrome Steel, and honed by our secret process. Money back if disappointed, and postage. These marvellous SHAVEX Blades are now 2d. instead of 4d.

SHAVEX IS SOLD EVERYWHERE IN

6d., 1/- & 1/6 Tubes and 1/6 Pots

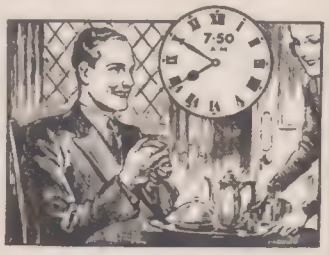
SEND THIS COUPON TO-DAY

For FREE Sample Tube of SHAVEX.

Cut out this Coupon, attach it to a piece of paper on which your name and address are written plainly, and send with **a 2d. stamp to the Shavex Zee-Kol Co., Ltd. (Dept. R.25), 40 Blenheim Road, Upper Holloway, London, N.19.**

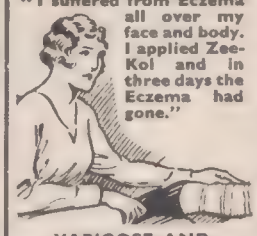
Good Lord! It's twenty to eight and I have to dress, shave and have my breakfast by eight o'clock, but what's the odds, having Shavex it only takes a minute or two to shave.

Hey Presto! I've had a perfect shave in two minutes. I washed, and while my face was still moist I smeared Shavex over it, and with the use of a Shavex Super Blade I've had the finest shave that anyone could ever have. I feel as fresh as a daisy.



Now I've got ten minutes to have my breakfast and a nice walk and catch the 8.15 train. When I think of the old soap and brush method with my face all smarting and the time it took me, Shavex is indeed a godsend. Since I have used Shavex everybody tells me how well and young I look. It's the Shavex Cream containing Almond Oil which I rub in after I shave that preserves my skin and keeps the wrinkles away.

ECZEMA.
"I suffered from Eczema all over my face and body. I applied Zee-Kol and in three days the Eczema had gone."



VARICOSE AND OTHER ULCERS.
"For years I could not walk with Ulcerated Leg. Zee-Kol cured it in a week."

ABSCESSES.
Zee-Kol instantly draws out all inflammation and the abscess is healed in twenty-four hours.

ERYSIPELAS.
This alarming skin affection will disappear in a few days with Zee-Kol applied night and morning. Its effect is marvellous.

CORNS.
The worst corns will soon disappear if Zee-Kol is applied to them night and morning.

SKIN DISEASES

Cured in a Night

WE HAVE A ROOM FULL OF TESTIMONIALS

Many may promise a wonderful cure but there is nothing like Zee-Kol. Beware of Imitations

ZEE-KOL is without doubt, the most wonderful skin remedy of all time. The cruellest Skin Diseases, such as Ulcers, Eczema, Abscesses, Erysipelas, etc., are rapidly and completely banished, and Pimples, Blackheads, Boils, Rashes, etc., disappear like Magic. Never was known any remedy like Zee-Kol. Where it touches, the skin takes on a finer and healthier glow. It destroys everything unhealthy to the skin. No skin disease can resist it. Forget it being a Patent Medicine. This is the only way we have of letting the world know of Zee-Kol's marvellous power of skin healing. We are supplying some of the big Skin Hospitals, for there is nothing in the world to compare with Zee-Kol. Do not hesitate. Go straight to your chemist and get a box of Zee-Kol and rest absolutely assured that your skin troubles will speedily be banished. Zee-Kol cures, in record time, Eczema, all kinds of Ulcers, Haemorrhoids, Chilblains, Bad Legs, Severe Burns, etc.

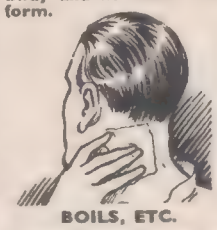
ZEE-KOL

The Wonder Skin Remedy

4 FREE GIFTS COUPON

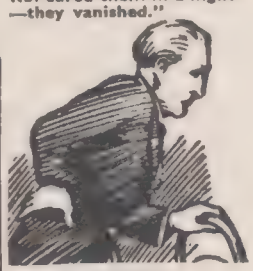
For sample of ZEE-KOL Ointment and Pills send 2d. stamp for postage. If sample of ZEE-KOL Medicated Soap and Doge Face Cream are also desired, send 4d. for postage and packing. Write to the **Shavex Zee-Kol Co., Ltd. (Dept. Z.K.22), 40 Blenheim Road, London, N.19.** At all chemists: Zee-Kol Ointment at 1/3, or a large tin 3/-.

BURNS.
Zee-Kol takes all pain away and no blister will form.



BOILS, ETC.
Boils cannot resist the wonderful healing properties of Zee-Kol, and in two days they disappear.

PIMPLES AND BLACKHEADS.
"I always had Blackheads and Pimples. Zee-Kol cured them in a night—they vanished."



LUMBAGO, STIFF JOINTS, ETC.
Splendid for Stiff Joints, rubbed in gently by the fire, and for Rheumatism.

ALMOND OIL **ZEE-KOL** **TOILET SOAP**

Beautiful and Talented Woman's Evidence that it

CREATES BEAUTY & PRESERVES BEAUTY

A revelation in transforming the worst skin in three nights into a most beautiful satiny and peach-like complexion.

Never before has a soap of this description been given to the public. It is made of the purest oils.

This is the wholesale price of the material used in most of the advertised soaps. Compare this price to Almond Oil, which is 5/6 per lb., and which is used in Zee-Kol Almond Oil Soap.

PALM OIL
costs **4d.** per lb.

ALMOND OIL
costs **5/6** per lb.

Now it is easily seen why Zee-Kol Almond Oil Soap is the most expensive to make as it is very rare to get Almond Oil in a soap at all. The price of Almond Oil will prove to everyone that there is no soap in the world so marvellous as Zee-Kol Almond Oil Soap.

"You play divinely, my darling, but I am a little distracted gazing at your beauty—and your complexion is the most perfect I have ever seen. And what is this glorious perfume that you use?"

FIANCEE: "You flatterer! I do not use any perfume. I use the most perfect soap that I have ever used in my life—it is called Zee-Kol Almond Oil Soap, and it is only 6d. a tablet, instead of 2/6, as I paid for other soaps which were not so good, and the lovely perfume comes from this Zee-Kol Almond Oil Soap. The Almond Oil keeps my face young and, as you say, beautiful." Everyone should try this beautiful soap—originally 1/- per tablet, now 6d.

It has taken years to know how to blend the oils in this soap, because it is not like other soaps to-day, which are only ordinary soaps. Its oils are a marvellous tonic to the skin. Blended with the most exquisite perfumes, ALMOND OIL has been chosen for this Zee-Kol Super-Toilet Soap. It contains the purest and the most natural oil for the skin. When washing the natural oil is replaced and the skin keeps firm, smooth and beautiful. No ordinary soap can do what Zee-Kol ALMOND Oil Soap does, yet it is sold everywhere to-day at half its former price—6d. instead of 1/-. Zee-Kol Almond Oil Soap is a Perfect Shampoo. All dandruff disappears and the hair shines with health.

Zee-Kol Pills together with the use of Zee-Kol Soap keep one perfectly slim and in perfect health. The skin will radiate health. The Zee-Kol Soap puts back the natural oils after washing. Zee-Kol Pills are sold price 1/3 and 3/- per box.

1/- LARGE TABLET NOW **6d.**

Obtainable from all Chemists and stores, or direct from
SHAVEX ZEE-KOL CO., LTD. (Dept. S16), 40 Blenheim Road, Upper Holloway, N.19.

DOGE CREAM

THE NEW MARVELLOUS

COMPLEXION RESTORER

HOWEVER sallow or patchy your complexion may be, we guarantee to make it perfect with Doge Cream. Doge Cream is absolutely a complete restorer. It works miracles on the skin and is the most ideal complexion cream on the market. It is the most remarkable cream that has ever been blended into a face cream. It contains Almond Oil and it does not grow hair. It preserves the skin and takes away all wrinkles and leaves the skin smooth as a child's. It was taken from an old Venetian recipe. We guarantee that there is not another cream in the world to compare with Doge Cream. It will make the worst complexion perfect. Send for a sample and see its marvellous results.

Doge Cream is not a vanishing cream, and does not dry up the skin, but restores the natural oils; it makes and keeps the skin really beautiful, and is a perfect base for powder. It keeps the skin supple, firm and youthful. If Doge Cream is smeared around the eyes at night wrinkles will vanish as if a miracle had happened.

We do not pay for Society women to give us their portraits, but over a thousand of the leading Society women use Doge Cream.

The original recipe was beyond price in the days when it was first known, but to-day we can make up all these preparations for the skin. When thinking of other face creams remember that Doge Cream is not like any of them. Try it and you will never go back to any other face cream you have ever used.

AT THE CASINO

SHEILA: Look at that beautiful dancer. That is Naide. She is supposed to be the loveliest woman in the world. She is Venetian. Everybody raves over her lovely skin. She has a special cream she uses.

BARBARA: Oh, darling! Do tell me what it is.

SHEILA: I asked her hairdresser this morning, and he told me it was called Doge Cream, and he also told me that she never uses anything else for her face and neck, only this Doge Cream. Doesn't she look beautiful! I thought the Cream must cost at least 10/- a pot, but you can get it for 1/- and 2/-.

BARBARA: That's wonderful. I shall not rest until I have got some.

Per Pot - - 1/-
Large Pot - 2/-
Large Tube - 9d.

Obtainable from all Chemists and Stores.

SEND THIS COUPON TO-DAY

For Free Sample Tube of DOGE CREAM

For sample of Doge Cream send 2d. stamp for postage. If sample of Doge Soap is also desired send 4d. for postage and packing. Write to the **Shavex Zee-Kol Co., Ltd. (Dept. De 27), 40 Blenheim Road, Upper Holloway, London, N.19.**

HERE'S GOOD HEALTH!

de KUYPER'S
HEART LABEL
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D.D.D. BRAND PRESCRIPTION

Continuing THE *Driving* FORCE

—having been forced by bad weather to stay over the week-end—full of enthusiasm for a new shape which he had been fortunate enough to secure. He had only obtained it, he was at pains to explain, through the good offices of an old friend who had strained friendship to the uttermost in releasing one of the most carefully guarded secrets of the coming fashion season. Get a big stock made up and their fortunes were made.

It took much less than this to set the inflammable imagination of Andrew Bacon alight, and it did not occur to him to ask his new manager what other results he had to show for his journey. Which perhaps was just as well for both of them.

It must be said in Fraser's favour that he was not a lazy man. At least, he was good at superintending, although he had long ago decided that anything in the nature of manual labour was not for one of his mental attainments. Eagerly he undertook the task of interviewing the blockmakers whose work it is to carve wooden replicas of exclusive models, from which can be cast the metal pans that are used by the manufacturer to enable him to turn out in grosses a hat that would take a Parisian designer a day to make singly. Thus is Chapel Street allowed to copy Mayfair within the span of a long week.

Blockmakers are hospitable tradesmen, and Fraser spent much time in their company.

While the Bacon-Fraser combination was undergoing its reorganisation, other manufacturers were also having their troubles. The day that breaks and finds a straw hat manufacturer not in trouble will be the millenium dawn.

Benn and Son, along with their competitors, were having their full share of worries. The airy affirmation of Fraser that they were refusing orders was as far from the truth as the majority of that gentleman's statements. It is true that their designer, Lucelle, ranked among the best in the trade, but the difficulties of the coming season had already worn her usually steady nerves to a shred, and her temper was such that even Amos Benn himself hardly dared to speak to her.

Bitterly Amos bemoaned the time when the "woman in the street" was content to wear a hat identical with that of her sisters, and half a dozen shapes sufficed for a whole season. Nowadays, being in the fashion meant wearing a hat entirely different from everyone else, with the possible exception of those sudden waves of imitation which followed a Royal wedding or the arrival of a Hollywood film star.

The return of his son from a visit to the City with the information that their latest "range" had only produced "scraps" did nothing to lessen his irritation.

"What's wrong with that lot?" he asked with a scowl, as he despondently viewed the results of weeks of hard work.

Phillip tossed the samples from his carton back on to the counter. "Nothing particularly wrong," he growled. "Just that there is no bite in the trade. The buyers don't know what they want, and if they did they wouldn't buy it. They've had such a rotten spring season. Doyle says that he dare not look at his returns. By the way, I bumped into Fraser on the train. He's left Claretons and gone to manage for Bacon."

"That's the end of poor old Andrew," observed Amos. "Well, I suppose he was bound to collapse sooner or later; Fraser will certainly accelerate the inevitable. I was talking to Clareton himself the other day and he told me that Matt's expense account alone was bigger than the profits."

"I thought he was such a fine salesman?"

"He's good at bluffing new accounts, but as he offends two for every one he opens, that's not much advantage. Neither Doyle nor Harris will have him near the place. However, we have got our own troubles. 'Drew Bacon will have to get a job as a newspaper reporter if he goes smash. The paper that gets him will be in clover. They'd have a scoop every morning, and they would not be much less reliable than most of those they publish nowadays."

It was a good three weeks before the trade really began to get a move on. Even then it was terribly spasmodic. However, Benns got their share and the machines commenced to hum once more. Especially was the whirr of the polishing wheels music to the ears of Amos. These machines, which are actually only sandpaper and compressed felt wheels driven at incredible speeds, are used to put that beautiful, velvety pile—known to every woman as peach bloom—on a fur felt. As in straw hats, so in felts; it's the finish that counts, and the manufacturer whose polishing wheels are racing at full pressure knows that his "finish" is right, and is happy.

Contentment seldom lasts long, however, in this trickiest of all trades; and Amos, who for a change, had himself made a trip to the City, returned at night with thunder on his brow and a savagely chewed cigar between his lips.

"It *would* happen just as we are getting into our stride," he grunted, tossing his cigar into the wastepaper basket, where it smouldered distastefully.

"*What* would happen?" Phillip looked up from the private letter he was writing.

"A new film is being released. Anna Grey is starring in it, and it's all about a hat. She gets murdered or something because of it. Every flapper from Land's End to John o' Groats will be yelling for one like it before the month is out."

"Damn!" exclaimed Phillip with immense feeling. "Who told you about it?"

"Doyle. Fortunately, he has got an advance photograph of the shape, which he has loaned to me. We shall have to get it into work at once; these crazes seldom last more than a fortnight. You can sell an unlimited number at top prices during that time, after which you can keep the rest. Meanwhile, all our running lines will stop dead."

Moodily Phillip studied the photograph which his father handed to him. It is doubtful if the beautiful Anna Grey had ever had a less fervent admirer.

"It's a tricky shape" he said at last "It will be slow production, and I suppose that, as you say, the demand will have fizzled out in a few weeks, but, while it lasts it will be another 'Marina.' Anna Grey's a sob-stuff heroine and that means that the flappers will follow her to a girl."

The partners were still discussing the quickest way of putting the new shape on the market, when Minnie, Benns' office girl, thrust a heavily permed head round the door with the information that Mr. Andrew Bacon was wanting to see Mr. Benn on important business.

"Good Lord!" groaned Phillip. "More trouble. Tell him we're busy, or dead or something."

"Can't do that," remonstrated the senior partner. "After all, Andrew means well. Show him in, Minnie."

Beyond making a sucking sound between his teeth, the younger man made no further protest. A moment later Bacon himself appeared in the doorway. With a feeling almost of shock, Amos noted how drastically the man had changed in the last few weeks.

Gone was his usual air of perky importance and eager volubility. His shoulders drooped pitifully, and dark, violet rings underlined his tired-looking eyes.

"Come right in 'Drew; nobody's going to eat you," said Amos.

Almost fearfully the newcomer advanced into the room. In one hand he carried a small, cardboard carton. With a muttered word of thanks he took the chair which Phillip courteously placed for him.

"Well?" queried Benn, as soon as his visitor was seated. "What is it you wish to see me about? Would you rather we spoke alone?" He glanced in the direction of his son.

"No-o, Amos," stammered Bacon. "I am glad Phillip is here, as my business concerns both of you. The fact is—I'm on the floor. Unless you can come to my help, I'm smashed; in any case I shall have to close down."

Amos nodded understandingly. "Matt Fraser?" he interrogated briefly.

"Yes, the man has ruined me. He promised to do such wonderful things, too. But all he has done is let me in for a lot of expense, and then, when things could go on no longer, he first insulted me and then walked out and left me to face the music."

"But surely you could not have lost such a lot in these few weeks?" asked Benn. "I know Fraser's an expensive traveller, but he can't *eat* money."

"It isn't that so much, although goodness knows that has been bad enough. It's stock . . . furs."

"Phew!" Amos whistled softly.

Fur felts can run into big money if any quantity is held. So long as they are in the raw hood it does not matter so much, as their value varies little. Once, however, they have been made into hats and those hats prove unfashionable, they become practically a total loss. Benn did not need to ask what had happened in this case.

"How many have you got?" he asked.

"Five hundred dozen."

"That's heavy stock for you, but it's the right end of the season. If the shapes are all right you ought to clear them, even at a slight loss."

"That's the worst of it. They're all one shape, and what is more, Fraser has been showing them all over the country for a week without selling a 'single.' It was his shape too; he bought it in Paris . . . said it was a certain winner and persuaded me to make up stock."

Amos shook his head sadly. "Sounds bad 'Drew old man." he said. "With all his faults, if Fraser could not move even a few of them it's pretty hopeless. Pushing dud stock into simple buyers is a speciality of his. In any case, what is it you want me to do?"

Quite suddenly Bacon's nerve went altogether. He had only been holding on to the shreds with difficulty until now.

"For God's sake help me, Amos. If I can only realise enough to meet my creditors and save my name, I don't mind. You have one of the best connections in the town; surely you can dispose of them. If I can get half-price for them I can just settle up. Won't you taken them off my hands? At least they are good colours."

With trembling fingers he undid the string which bound the carton and tumbled a couple of sample hats on to the table.

Amos heard a sharp gasp from his son; at the same time a vein throbbed in his own temple.

"Did you say that they were all this shape?" His voice was suddenly gruff.

"Yes. As I told you, Fraser bought it in Paris . . . said it was an exclusive design and would be all the rage this season. Like a fool I believed him."

Temptation comes in many guises, but every man has his code. The sins of Amos Benn were legion. . . . Mrs. Benn had spent a decade enumerating them. Slowly he raised his eyes to the white, quivering face of Andrew Bacon. Then, with a quick movement he reached for the photograph he had brought from the City. . . . Then he spoke crisply:

"What you need, 'Drew, is a first-class salesman." Bacon shuddered at the words. "I'm taking on the job," he continued, " . . . for one day only. Leave those samples with me and go home and sleep sound. To-morrow you can start packing them ready for delivery to Doyle of Lion Ticket. My commission will be a box of cigars, and I'll choose the brand myself."

Two evenings later Amos Benn strolled into the "George" for a well-earned beer, Between his teeth was a long, aromatic cigar of expensive brand, one of a new box which lay in his office desk. He cast a casual eye over a group by the bar, and drew up unobtrusively behind them. In the centre of the group, holding the stage as usual, was Fraser. He was speaking in the bombastic style that was part of his make-up.

"I had to turn it in with Bacon," he said in a loud voice. "Couldn't stand the old fool any longer. His business methods are as antiquated as the Ark, and he himself keeps running round in circles wondering what to do next. I told him 'I'm a salesman, not a nursemaid.' In the end I tore my contract up in front of his eyes."

"Then you tore up about a couple of hundred pounds in commission alone." interposed Benn dryly. "Bacon has cleared every one of those shapes you let him in for. They're a dead ringer for the new Anna Grey. What is more, he has put himself in sound with the biggest buyer in London. He won't need any traveller to sell to him either," he added, maliciously.

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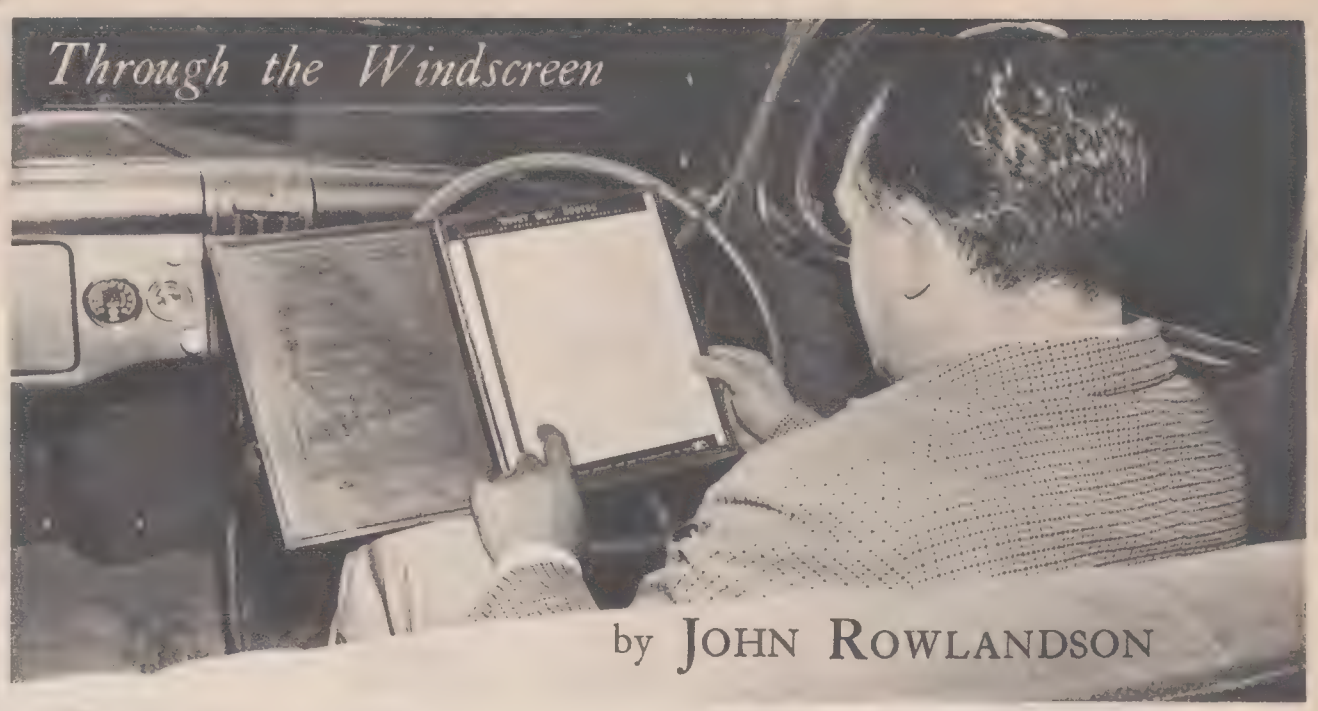

by JOHN ROWLANDSON

"and I'll take the Low Road"

CARAVELS of Columbus, sailing out over the edge, carried the Western horizon a thousand leagues into the setting Sun. The world had begun to grow. Journeying into the eyes of dawn, the one by land and the other by sea, Marco Polo and Vasco da Gama plucked at the veils of far Cathay and brought home tales of wealth and wonders incredible.

The world grew on. The East was found, and the West. Between them, and viewed by Martin Cortes in silent awe, spread the vast Pacific unmeasured, until Ferdinand Magellen laid the slender girdle of a ship's wake around the globe.

The world had grown then, to its utmost; its outline traced; its measure taken. From now it began to dwindle, bit by bit. The frontiers of the unexplored, contesting man's invasion step by step through the crawling ages, scattered at last before his machines. The collapse of space in terms of time has brought the other end of distance to our feet, and viewing the world as a close-up there seems little left to find. It is all on the map.

Accurately surveyed, printed and bound; an ocean, a continent boiled down to a page of the atlas. For those of us still fevered of the wanderlust, what is there left to do? And the answer is, to search the map. For much, once found, has been lost again.

There is a fascination in re-discovery. Lonely islands, precariously located by ancient mariners with hour glass and globe, cross staff or astrolabe, have been lost again for decades and for centuries. It is even so ashore. Wars, migrations and cataclysmic upheavals have left great continental spaces desolate, to relapse into primal solitude.

The bulk of traffic by land and sea follows the beaten track, but the old order changes. Steamship lanes do not follow in the wake of sail. The coaching roads of eighteenth and nineteenth century England largely ignored the wandering medieval pack tracks, and lived their rollicking era. But the leaping trace, the swingle tree, the post horn and the ringing hooves, in their turn, have passed. For an interval the turnpikes of England were silent. Old inns decayed, their painted signs forlorn upon the gallows. The railway puffed, supreme.

During this interlude, born in raucous obscurity and reared amidst invigorating hostility, the petrol engine grew to a lusty adolescence. It came, for good or ill; but it found the roads again. Scouring the countryside, its bark and crackle were heard, and cursed, from Land's End to John o' Groats. Rip van Winkle hostelries awoke, blew old birds' nests from their cluttered eaves and tinkled again to the tune of glass and pewter. The past shook hands with the present.

A wave of re-discovery lured many folk awheel. The roads grew sociably frequented; unpleasantly crowded; perilously congested. The petrol engine, with embarrassing fertility, multiplied beyond all expectation.

Arterial roads were reeled out. Bypasses appeared. The traffic surged and roared on to them, swooping their wide curves, eating up their arid straights. Watch it, from a safe place, on a fine weekend or a Bank Holiday.

A grim cavalcade, what with the weekly casualty lists and the Police Messages in the News Bulletin. Taut nerves and frayed tempers, eyes glued to the traffic ahead and mirrored from behind, play the devil with some of us. Where now, is the joy of the open road?

And here is the folly of it. The new roads are made to supplement the old: not to supplant them. There are thousands of miles of splendid pre-arterial roads all over the country. Yet a great proportion of them are three parts deserted, while month by month the new roads grow more dangerously congested.

The bye-ways of England are unique; as smooth of surface as they are refreshing to the eye. Let us re-discover them. Starting out from London along the Great West road into the Bath road, heading for Sonning. That is a pleasant spot. To reach it in a fitting humour we must choose a route in keeping.

Ahead of us, standing foursquare at the parting of the ways, is the "Peggy Bedford". You know it? Then the loss is yours. Repair it.

There is a "Merry Go Round" here, which, circled right handed for half its circumference, leads to a long by-pass. But straight ahead, to the left of the Hotel, is the old road. We'll take it.

Two or three miles through a miniature riviera, the basin of the Colne, the Wyrardsbury and the Colne brook, take us into Colnbrook itself.

The road bears right. Let it: for that way leads again to what we left five miles ago. We bear left and among the trees and hedges come into Horton, and now which way? Beyond a triangular village green great oaks and elms bar the way ahead. But a road this side of them crosses our path, and runs from East to West. This makes it easy. For we are going West.

Datchet comes next, then Windsor. Between them and past a bridge, where Henry VIII came to meet Ann Boleyn, the view of Windsor Castle is a fairy tale whispered by the willows to the dreaming Thames. Through Windsor to Oakley Green and Touchen End; by Twyford into Sonning, I might tell of every tree and inn and green. But it is yours to find, as much as it was mine. Though of the finding, there is something still to tell.

Firstly, it is all on the map, and secondly, people read their maps in different ways.

Some rely on map reading as they go along, which is well enough, if arduous: not every man's meat. To unravel a network of mapped roads and keep to a chosen route, in a moving car, is apt at times to lead one to a farmyard in the back of beyond. Others prefer, with guide book and with map, to plan their way in advance. Anticipating its contingencies, they work out a route card, with mileages and landmarks to guide them on their way.

This is the better plan; but even so, a lack of local knowledge may land one in the soup, or in a watersplash, whose depth deceives, till water filling the exhaust pipe stops the engine. Combining these methods though, we have the formula complete: a map, with your chosen route so emphasised that you may see it at a glance, above all others, even as you go along.

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A set of maps has been published covering England, Scotland and Wales from Land's End to Loch Awe, from St. Andrews to Dungeness. Marked out on them, clearly distinct from all other detail, are the tracks of forty selected routes on the less frequented roads, over the length and breadth of the country, or for any journeys intermediate.

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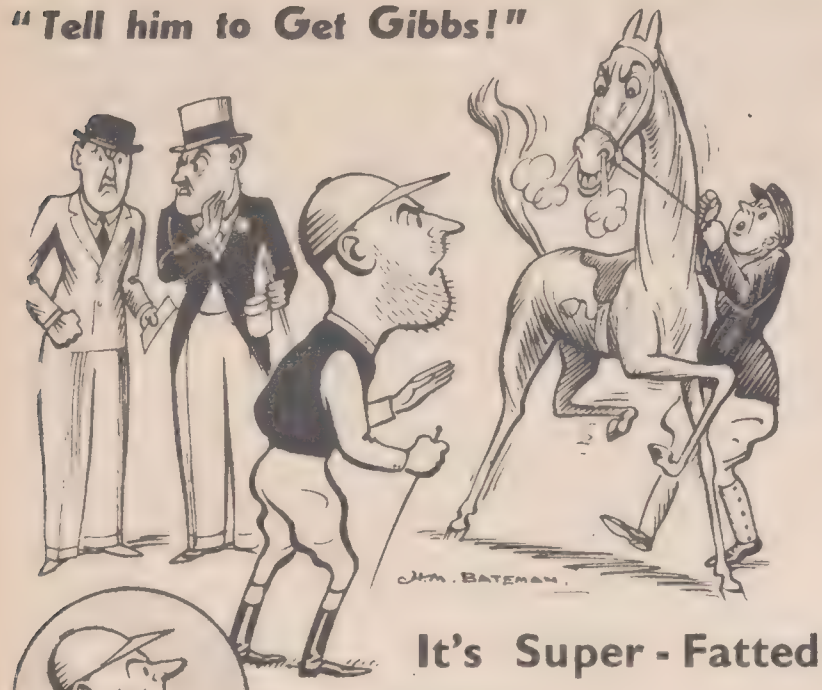

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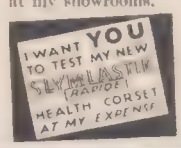

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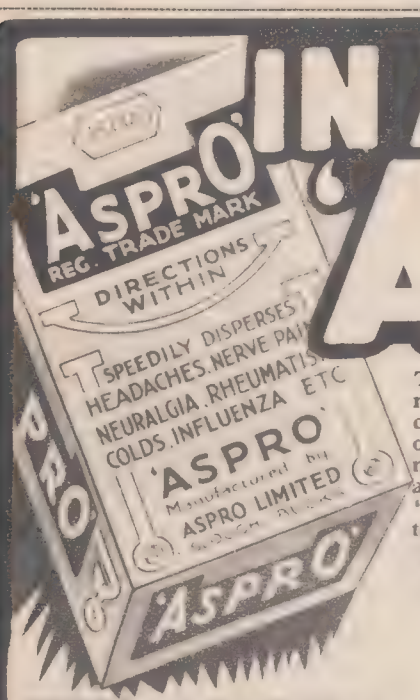

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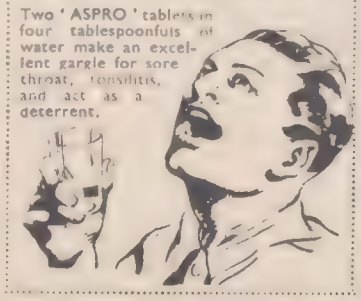

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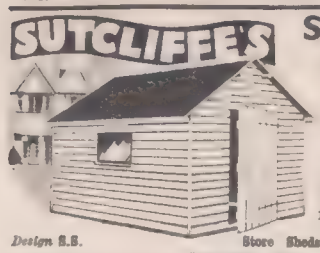

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Continuing

BAPTISM *of the* BAG

in his eye. During those weeks of preparation he had somehow managed to keep the matter out of his mind, but, now he knew himself to be fit and ready for the fray, all his black rage against Cha boiled up afresh.

The memory of the scene of the surgery stung him more bitterly. The recollection of the rare occasions when he had subsequently encountered Cha, of Cha's impudent stare crossing his own studiously detached gaze, of the shout of derisive laughter following him down the street, these burst on him with new violence and goaded him beyond the limit of his endurance.

As he strode up the drive of Arden House he thought wickedly: "I'll make him pay. I'll take it out of him. Not another day will I wait. I've suffered long enough. Now I'm going to get my own back."

In this mood he entered the hall, and there, oddly enough, on the slate which was hung specifically for this purpose, he found a call written up for Mrs. Bell at the little house in Quay Side.

Oddly, in a way, but not unusual, for Mrs. Bell was something of a hypochondriac, and once a month or thereabouts Finlay was obliged to call and reassure her on the origin of some vague pain or indeterminate symptom.

It suited him down to the ground. He would visit the old woman to-morrow—which was Saturday—prescribe for her, and blandly leave word that Cha was to fetch the medicine from the surgery in the afternoon. The same circumstances, the same time, the same place—but oh, how different the result! Finlay set his jaw hard. "I'll give him medicine," he thought viciously, "I'll give him a dose he won't forget."

The next day came, and Finlay made straight for No. 3 Quay Side the moment he was through his morning consultations. It was a lop-sided, single-gabled, old-fashioned bit of a house perched right on the river front behind the Elephant and Castle, and it protruded slightly in the rambling row as if the pressure of its neighbours had squeezed it out of shape.

Mrs. Bell met him at the door, her fat, round face pulled into an anxious frown.

"Oh, doctor, doctor," she protested. "It was last night I wanted ye to come and not this mornin'. What way did ye not come when I sent down word? I've been worried fair sick the livelong night."

"Don't you worry now, Mrs. Bell," he reassured her. "We'll soon put you right."

"But it's no' me," she wailed. "It's no' me at all. It's Cha!"

Cha! Finlay stared at her with an altered face; then, very thoughtfully, he followed her up the narrow wooden stairs into a little uncarpeted attic room.

There, propped up in a chipped truckle bed, garbed in a not very clean day shirt and the famous muffler with a sporting newspaper on one side and a packet of Woodbines on the other, was Cha.

He greeted Finlay derisively:

"What do you want? The rag and bottle man doesn't call till Tuesday."

"Be quiet, Cha, now do!" placated Mrs. Bell. "And show the doctor your arm." Turning to Finlay: "It was a scratch he got at his work doctor, the back end of last week. But it started to beel, and, oh, dearie me, it's come up something fearful."

"My arm's fine," Cha declared rudely. "I'm not wantin' any make-down doctor to look at it."

"Oh, Cha! Oh, Cha!" groaned Mrs. Bell. "Will ye not mind that terrible tongue of yours!"

Finlay stood with a stiff face trying to control his temper. At last, in a difficult voice, he said:

"Suppose you show me the arm."

"Aw, what the hell!" protested Cha. But from beneath the patchwork counterpane he produced the arm, heavily, as though it were made of lead.

Finlay took one look at it, then his eyes widened in surprise. An enormous swelling stretched from wrist to elbow, an angry, boggy tumefaction—of the diagnosis there was not the slightest doubt. Cha had acute cellulitis of the arm.

Making his attitude detached, completely professional, Finlay set about his examination. He took Cha's temperature—Cha's remark as he stuck the thermometer rakishly in his mouth being:

"What do you take me for . . . . an ostrich?"

But for all Cha's pretence of coolness his temperature registered 103.5 degrees Fahrenheit.

"Have you any headache?"

"Naw," Cha lied. "And don't think you'll present me with one."

There was a pause; then Finlay looked at Mrs. Bell.

"I shall have to give him a whiff of chloroform and open up the arm," he declared impassively.

"Not on your life," said Cha. "There's no chloroform for me. If you're going to butcher me at a', ye can butcher me without it."

"But the pain . . ."

"Aw! What the hell!" Cha interposed scornfully. "Ye know fine ye're wantin' to hurt me. Go ahead and see if you can make me squeal. Now's the chance to get a little of your own back."

The blood rushed to Finlay's face.

"That's a lie and you know it. But just you wait. I'll get you better. Then I'll teach you a lesson that you won't forget."

He swung round abruptly, and, opening his bag, began to prepare his instruments. Cha's answer was to whistle "The Bluebells of Scotland" with satiric variations.

Cha didn't go on whistling, of course—though, no doubt, he would have liked to. It was a nasty business opening the mass of inflammation without an anæsthetic. His stocky figure went quite rigid, and his face a dirty grey, as Finlay made two swift, deep incisions, then started to probe.

When it was finished Cha drew a stump of cigarette from behind his ear, lit up, and hardly regarded his bandaged arm.

"You've made a bonny hash of it, right enough!" he exclaimed critically. "But what else could we expect?" Then, with the cigarette in his hand, he promptly fainted.

He came to, of course, but he was far from being right. That afternoon when Finlay called again he found him in the grip of a raging septicæmia. The infection had spread into the blood stream. Cha was delirious; his temperature 105, his pulse 140; he was dangerously ill. Mrs. Bell resolutely opposed his removal to hospital.

"Cha wouldn't have it! Cha wouldn't have it!" she kept on repeating, wringing her hands. "He's a guid son to me for all his wildness, I winna go against him now he's badly."

So the whole responsibility of the case fell on Finlay. For a whole week he battled for Cha's life. He loathed Cha—yet he felt that he must save him. He came three times a day to the house in Quay Side, religiously dressing the arm himself; he sent specially to Stirrock's in Glasgow for some new anti-toxin; he even went into Paxton's in the High Street and ordered the nourishment which kept Cha alive. Not a labour of love, you may be sure; for lack of a better phrase, you might call it a labour of hate.

At last, after a horrible week, Cha had his crisis on the eighth day. As he sat late into the night beside Cha's bed, Finlay saw positively that Cha would recover. Indeed, towards midnight, Cha stirred and opened his sunken eyes, which, out of his gaunt, unshaven face, fastened themselves on Finlay. He looked and looked; then, moving his pale lips, he sneered:

"Ye see . . . I'm getting better in spite of ye." Then he went off to sleep.

During his convalescence Cha was even worse. The stronger he got the more outrageous he became.

"Thought ye'd take my arm off so ye'd have the beating of me!" or "Ye'd have finished me, I suppose, if ye'd had the guts to do it!"

Not that Finlay stood it stoically. Oh, dear no! With Cha out of danger, he dropped his professional dignity and thoroughly let himself go. Hammer and tongs they went at it, slanging each other unmercifully, the young riveter and the young doctor, until Mrs. Bell would thrust her hands upon her ears and run in terror from the room.

Finally, when Cha was up and ready to depart for a month at the Ardbeg Home, Finlay took him pointedly aside:

"Your treatment's finished now. You're better. You're going down to get braced up at the seaside. Well, when you're back again and thoroughly fit, come and see me at the surgery. I'm going to give you the hiding of your life."

"Right!" Cha nodded defiantly. "That suits me down to the ground."

The four weeks passed slowly. Indeed, they passed extremely slowly. One by one Finlay counted the days. He hated Cha so much he missed him. Yes, he actually missed him. Life was rather flat without Cha's scornful grin and bold, satiric tongue. But eventually, on the last Saturday of the month, Cha returned and came bustling into the surgery, bronzed and fit, as strong, stocky, and sardonic as he had ever been before. Up he came to Finlay. They faced each other. There was a pause.

But what happened next was terrible—so terrible it can hardly be set down.

Finlay looked at Cha. And Cha looked at Finlay. They grinned at each other sheepishly. Then, with one accord, they delightedly shook hands.

What it Means to You — *by Francis Williams*

No Wheat Shortage

BREAD is in the news again. Periodically the staple diet of millions soars into the headlines as wheat crops are reported to be bad or abundant. This time, as I write, an 8½d. loaf is certain, and a 9d. loaf—the dearest for many years—far from unlikely.

The blame for all this is being laid at nature's doorstep. After years of abundant harvests, severe drought in the middle west of the United States and on the Canadian prairies has spoiled vast acreages. In Europe violent rains have done considerable damage.

Despite these crop failures the world is, however, still a long way from the critical position as regards wheat supplies which has been suggested in some quarters.

No small part of the current scare news comes from the speculative gambling on the wheat pits of Chicago, Winnipeg and Liverpool. For some years wheat has been dull; now with the price at its highest for six years these speculators are making up for lost time.

Higher wheat prices mean more profit to them but dearer bread to the ordinary person.

In 1934 the world stocks of wheat totalled 1,100 million bushels. Poor crops had, however, reduced that store by 300 million bushels by July, 1935.

Another 300 million has been withdrawn since then, leaving stocks available for export at roughly 500 million bushels—or slightly less than enough to satisfy the needs for importing nations for a whole year. It is true crops are inferior again in Canada and the United States, but in Europe there is every prospect of a harvest in the Danube countries 50 millions in excess of last year!

There is, too, better news of the United States crops which suggests that early estimates may be considerably improved upon. Moreover the whole situation now is really determined by Australia and Argentine whose crops are not due for harvesting until December. If those harvests are reasonably good—and there is no suggestion to the contrary—there need be no world shortage this year.

Higher prices are probably partially justified; but there is not the least excuse for the frantic speculative movements which are now taking place. And certainly there is no justification for threats of an even dearer loaf.

For advice on current economic problems, write to the Economic Advisory Bureau, "The Passing Show," 31 Bow Street, London, W.C.2, enclosing stamped envelope.

HIS BACKACHE
WAS DUE TO HIS
LUMBAR NERVE

Weak Nerves can bring on symptoms of every Health Trouble known! Thousands of people are suffering from Nerve Trouble . . . and do not know it! They are heading straight for a BREAKDOWN yet never realise that it is their NERVES which are at fault.

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BACKACHE
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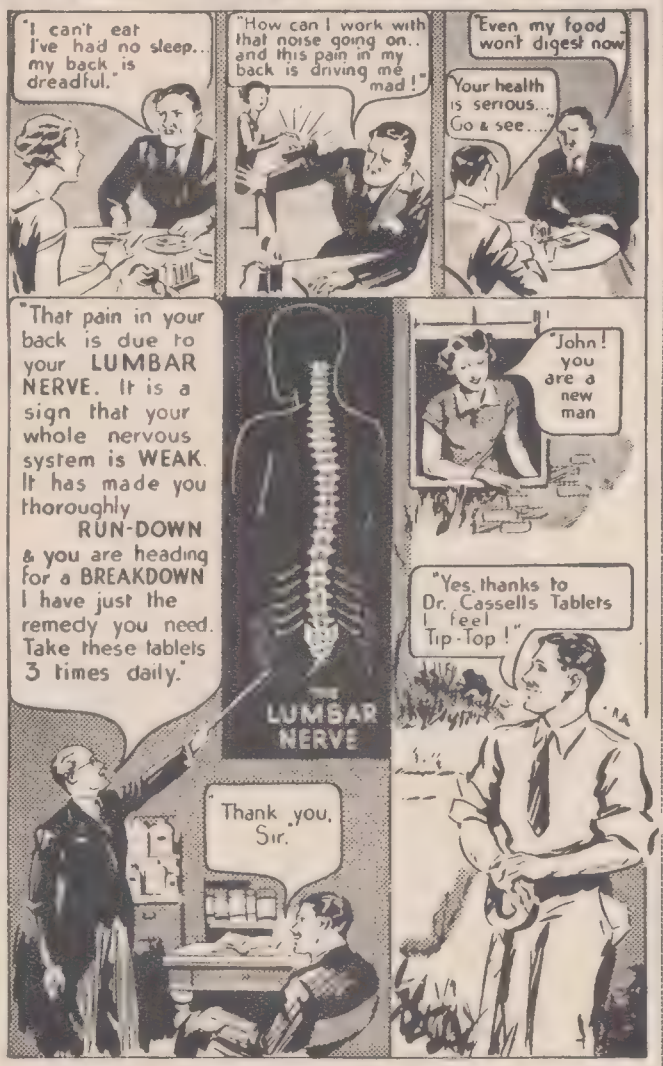
you need Dr. Cassells Tablets most urgently. **DO NOT DELAY!** It is **NOW** you must act . . . **NERVE BREAKDOWN** comes often with devastating swiftness. **STOP IT NOW** while there is time.



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says Shirley Stone

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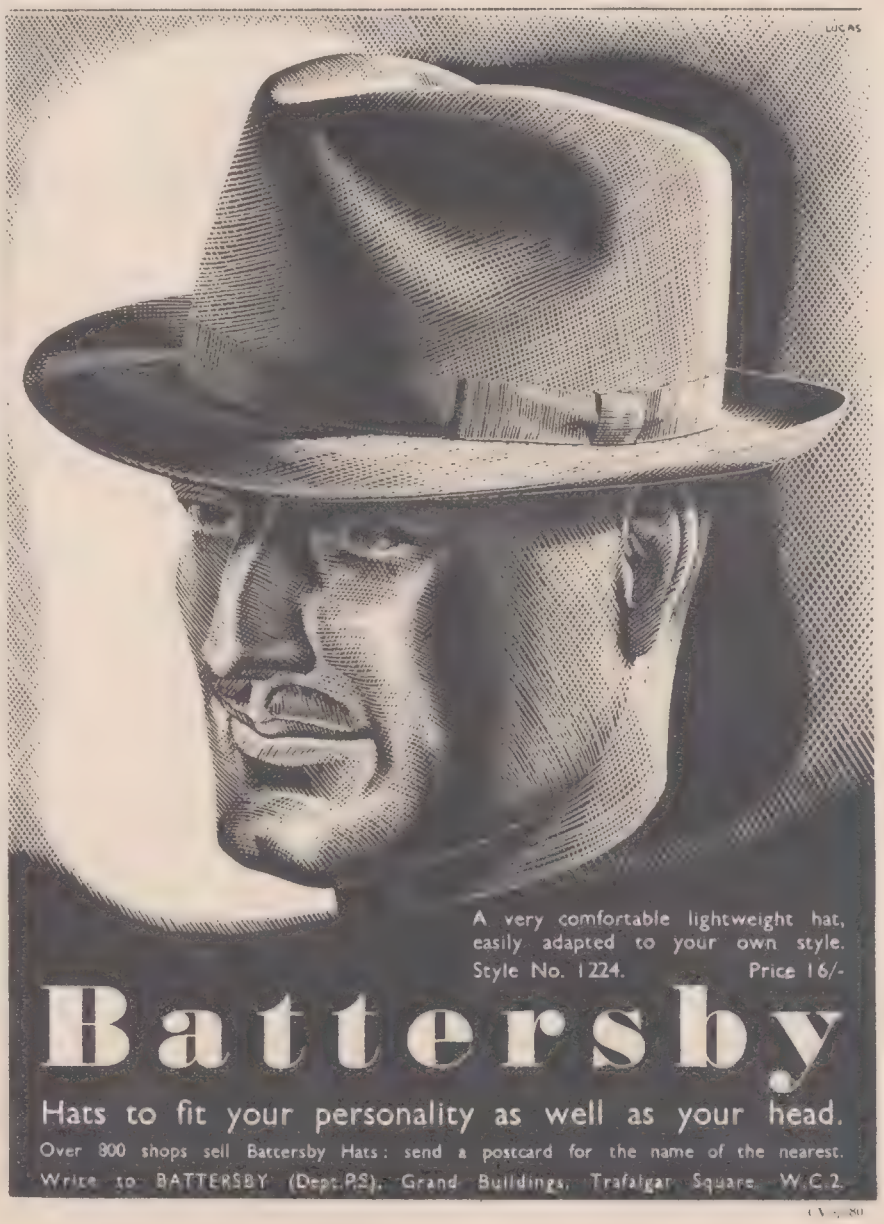

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The EIGHTH GUEST

THERE were seven of us, three women and four men, all forming one of those little travelling variety shows visiting military cantonments in India, and providing welcome professional entertainment for the British troops there. At the time of which I am writing, the business was both profitable and pleasant, especially as our little crowd had acquired a good reputation.

A good reputation, which speeds ahead in most mysterious fashion, makes a tour profitable and pleasant as nothing else can do. We had been so successful, after three months of travel from one part of India to another, that we should have been a singularly happy company. In some ways, we were. Such continuous travel, in a country like India, is not without its discomforts. And occasionally, the hotels or places where we put up for a week at a time proved not to be exactly laps of luxury.

However, we were innured to these comparatively small details. They were more than compensated for, after all, by the kindly receptions we met everywhere from officers and soldiers and British civilians, who also offered us more entertainment than was sometimes good for us.

There were two reasons for this. The first, and most important was that our team work made for a practically perfect show. A second reason, natural in a country like India, lay in the fact that our three girls were as good-looking as they were charming in character. I may as well mention here that, with the exception of myself (the pianist), they were all Australians.

One of the girls, Doris, was wife to the comedian, who managed the show in partnership with me. The other two, Edna and Alice, were single and billed as "sisters," although they had no real relationship to each other. They had worked together, however, for some time before this tour, and were fast friends.

Both, naturally, had a string of admirers, Alice especially, being the younger and—if there was anything to choose between them both—the more attractive. In fact, by the time we had reached that part of our tour about which I am writing, it was recognised by all of us that Alice would be leaving us, when the tour ended, remaining in India to be married to a young artillery captain, whom she had met at Lahore.

Personally, I was glad. For he was a very nice fellow, and so tremendously in love with her that he obtained leave and travelled with us for two weeks, so as to be near her. When he left us to go back to his own station, he begged me to look after her for him. Not that I thought there was any need for that, although I gave him my promise. For Alice was well able to look after herself, anyhow.

I was in fact rather amused over this Romeo and Juliet business, and said as much to Doris, casually.

"It may not be quite so amusing yet," she retorted, quite serious. "What about Chris? I don't think he's going to take it too easily."

Chris was a racial mixture. He had the woolly hair of the negro, though his skin was practically white. He had much of the negro temperament, though he would go off into a white-hot rage if anyone alluded to him as coloured. He sang jazz-stuff (crooning wasn't known then), and he did tap-dancing, partnered by Alice, as well as sketch and other troupe work.

We all knew that he was passionately devoted to Alice, not openly as a lover, but with a dumb dog-like devotion. He had admittedly not taken too happily the intrusion of this artillery captain from Lahore, though saying nothing. He had just sulked a little, particularly on the night when Alice and the captain became engaged.

He only really became his old self after the captain had gone back to his battery. And then he sparkled. Chris indeed could be amazingly funny, and could always be depended on to liven up our party on occasions when circumstances provided us with good reason to be downhearted, which had admittedly been rare.

About a fortnight after Alice's artillery captain had left us, however, we ran right into a spot of decidedly unpleasant trouble. The rains were on, and at their zenith, and we were travelling from some cantonment on the plains, a long journey ahead of us, on our way to Quetta in the hills.

Glad enough as we were for the cooling break of the monsoon, we were to discover that it had its disadvantages. The river had swollen and over-run its banks so badly that vast areas of the countryside, over which the line passed, were flooded to a considerable depth. The train travelled for miles through water, and the slow rate of progress rather frayed our nerves.

It was just on dusk, and we were hungrily anticipating the next stop at a station where we would have dinner, when the train jerked to a violent standstill with a tremendous screaming of brakes.

Flung this way and that in the darkness, we heard natives shouting and women shrieking, and at once concluded we were involved in a collision. Matters were not so bad as that, however, if bad enough for us. Montey, the husband of Doris, learnt by enquiry that the heavy rains had brought a huge chunk of the hillside crashing, burying quite a stretch of the line. Only a red light waved by a native signalman had saved us from a serious smash.

Stranded, the only Europeans on the train, we were wondering where and how we were to pass the night, which was wild with rain and wind. The Eurasian guard, fortunately, was able to help us.

"You are lucky," he told us. "Not far from the line here there is a dak bungalow where you can put up. For a few annas, this native will take you there."

Whether we were fortunate or not, in view of later events, that dak bungalow provided at least accommodation and food. For the rest, lit by oil-lamps, it was a derelict and unhappy-looking place. Most of these Government guest bungalows (relics of the old mail-tonga days in India) are cheerless, but this one was worse than any I had experienced.

The native khansamah, however, turned up a good dinner, and the native khitmagar buzzed about, glad in the hope of making "plenty baksheesh" out of us. We men were glad that the khansamah had a good store of spirits, for we had arrived drenched and low-spirited, and whiskey went down very well indeed. I noticed, though not with particular attention at the time, that Chris drank rather fast and furiously, becoming very voluble, and not pleasantly so, either.

That was not usual with him, for drink always made him merry and full of fun.

True Life Stories

Ten guineas for *your* True Life Story if you write it yourself in printable form; two guineas if you send us only a summary. That is "Passing Show's" invitation to readers, made because we believe in the old saying that "Truth is Stranger than Fiction"

● He went down like a log, the revolver clattering to the stone floor

Still, after our experience that evening we were all feeling a bit jaded and on edge.

The rain having suddenly stopped and given way to a bright moon, Montey and I went out to arrange for a native to go over to the line and find out how long it would be before traffic could run again, as we were due to open at Quetta the next night. When we rejoined the others, Edna and Alice had gone to bed, while Doris was talking with the other man. Chris sat alone, and was helping himself to more whisky as we came in.

He wasn't staggeringly drunk, but he was in an aggressive mood, and I did not quite like the look of his eyes. Nor did Montey, for he took the bottle from him and suggested that a good sleep would do him good. Chris lumbered to his feet, bulking angrily, and for a moment I thought he was going to strike Montey. Then, he seemed to change his mind, and cackled inanely.

"Sleep?" he leered. "Oh, yes, we'll all sleep, boy. We'll all sleep like hell, won't we? Sleep—and never wake up any more!"

He slouched off to his room.

Doris, it appeared, was anxious as to future happenings. She said to us, when he had disappeared, that there had been a nasty scene between Alice and him, which was why she and the other girl had gone off to bed. Chris had wanted her to break off her engagement, hinted—if she refused—that he would do something desperate. Doris was inclined to panic.

"Don't be silly, my dear!" her husband reassured her, laughing. "I can't see Chris doing anything desperate. What could he do, anyhow? In the morning he'll wake up with a sore head, and be sorry for having made an ass of himself. That's about as desperate as he'll ever be."

On the face of it, that seemed all one need expect, but somehow something about Chris that night made me doubtful if things were going to be quite so easy. Not that I feared anything immediate or definitely startling. I just felt uneasy, and there came creeping into my mind the promise I had made to her artillery captain to look after Alice for him.

That kept me wakeful, tossing from side to side in the tense silence of that tomblike bungalow. There were four bedrooms, by the way. Doris and her husband had one, the two girls another, Chris and the other man the third, and I was alone in a small one. They all opened on to the main room one side, and on the other on to a verandah running right round the building.

It was on this verandah, in the early hours of the morning, that—wakening from a doze—I heard footsteps moving furtively, the slip-slop of a man's feet on stone. I jumped up, stepping out on to the verandah, which was lit by the moon. A figure was just about to round the corner of the building ahead, a slouching figure with something held in the right hand. The figure of Chris. . . .

In a flash, padding the stone floor, bare-foot, I was after him, alarmed. When I turned the corner, he was not to be seen. But, before I had taken a half a dozen more steps, wondering what he was after, the silence was broken by a woman's scream of horror, followed by a revolver shot, and then another. Cold with the worst of fears, I dashed towards the open door of the main room, out of which Chris came hurtling, wild-eyed and yelling something about a "ghost."

To be on the safe side, I clipped him one just behind the left ear, and he went down like a log, a revolver clattering to the stone floor from inert fingers. Then, dreading what I should find, I passed into the main room. Here, Alice and all the rest were crowded in a panic. Here, startlingly, I found also a complete stranger, an Englishman with a white and puzzled face. He explained himself as a railway official, concerned with the clearing of the line. He had come over to the bungalow for a couple of hours' sleep, and seen Chris crawling around with a revolver.

He had followed Chris into Alice's room, realising something wrong, and there had meant to grab him. Chris, it seemed, had taken him in the darkness to be a ghost, and fired wildly at him, fortunately missing, and then had bolted madly out into my arms.

Afterwards, Chris confessed that, maddened by drink and jealousy, he had intended shooting Alice first, and then himself. . . . That was eventually forgotten and forgiven. But, if chance had not led that eighth guest to the bungalow so fortuitously, murder and suicide must have inevitably ended that night for us.

Our Great Double Gift to Every Reader

NEVER before have readers of THE PASSING SHOW had such a wonderful opportunity as that announced in the centre pages of this issue. It's THE PASSING SHOW's sensational surprise for every reader—a Free *Double* Presentation which we invite every one of our readers to accept. Two magnificent Gifts and you can take your choice—one or both.

First there is *The Fifty Most Amazing Crimes of the Last 100 Years*. It's the most astonishing book of its kind in the world, and has never before been offered to the public.

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In this completely new work drama follows drama, sensation follows sensation. Here are murders that have staggered the world, robberies that for their sheer daring leave one breathless, mysteries that have baffled the keenest brains of continents.

Through the pages of this marvellous volume stride notorious men and women whose names and deeds have been made crime history. Landru, Crippen, Charles Peace, Jack the Ripper, A. W. Waite, the real life Jekyll and Hyde etc.

The Fifty Most Amazing Crimes of the Last 100 Years contains 768 pages, nearly 300,000 words and 67 illustrations, which include portraits of principal characters in the cases and 17 specially drawn full page pictures.

The second of THE PASSING SHOW's Great Gifts is *The Mammoth Book of Thrillers, Ghosts and Mysteries*—a superb companion volume. It is the same in size and binding and contains the same number of words and pages.

This wonderful second gift contains *fifty great stories that will hold you spell-bound by fifty great masters of mystery.*

In this book is a sealed section under which lie nine super mysteries. Will you break the seal? There are 66 illustrations in this volume.

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This is the only opportunity which "Passing Show" readers will have of participating in this unique Free Double Presentation. The Reservation Forms which appear in the centre pages of this issue will not be published again and no reservations for either one or both volumes can be accepted after Tuesday, September 22.

So hurry! You have not a moment to lose. Turn to page 24 and post the Reservation Forms at once.

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YOU'RE *telling* US!

WHEN our old wounds begin to trouble us again, and the gentlemen who insist on writing to say (*a*) they heard that one in their cradles, and (*b*) have we heard this one? are more than usually troublesome, we like to think that some day we shall take our ease on a sheltered lawn, indulging in our favourite vice of laziness. For like the American philosopher we love work; it fascinates us; we could sit and look at it for hours. We like to think of a country cottage, thatched and shuttered nestling on the bank of a trout stream, its splashing, glimmering coolness heard more than seen.

We think of autumn woodlands, of the early falling day, the evening mists and the lights of lamps suddenly illuminating the snugness under the dormer roof just as you are feeling the pinch of the first frost. We think of the freshening breeze that sweeps the mountain-side as you trudge the path through the heather watching a few bleared lights blink into sight when darkness flows across the valley.

We think of places where there are no morning trains or inexorable factory hooters to set us scuttling about our business, where the curse of Adam does not seem to send people tumbling down escalators eagerly fleeing from the brittle sunshine of an autumn morning.

WE JUST hate to see this dream picture of a quiet country life, our last illusion in a world of lost hopes, gradually fading into the land of celestial fauna as we read Graham Williams' mighty broadside on the evils of rusticating.

"I have long wanted to dispel the apparently everlasting illusion that life in a country village is an ideal existence," says Graham, as he hides behind a formidable Welsh address before delivering his next round of ammunition. "You cannot regard your life as your own; even your most personal activities must be shared, for your acquaintanceship embraces the whole village. You cannot do the smallest thing in an unorthodox manner without the village being aware of it almost immediately, and orthodoxy in a small village is very strictly defined.

"It is likely to cause a scandal if you are seen in 'shorts.' You feel a change in the atmosphere in an instant and then wicked whispers travel from house to house in a way that would disgrace a professional espionage system.

"You can't arrive home in the early morning from a 'party' without having to explain your behaviour sometime during the latter part of the day. Nothing remains private for long.

If you are seen in shorts

"Buy a new suit and the local reporter will be nosing around half an hour later to find particulars of the fortune you have inherited. Buy a new car and you are everybody's friend. Although not up to the standard you might expect, the food available is passable; the beer can be absorbed without undue discomfort after some display of determination and the right amount of practice. But water can only be obtained from a pump that doesn't work.

"If you do manage to squeeze a bucketful out of this temperamental tap, you find that what is left in the bucket by the time you have staggered ungracefully home is inhabited by a generous assortment of slimy creatures who live only to prove that scientists were wrong in saying water was a colourless, tasteless liquid."

HAVING BROUGHT our dream cottage crashing about our ears, Mr. Williams scuttles back to his mountains leaving us to haggle never so wisely that there must be a peaceful haven somewhere to which we can walk when the night is full of stars and the landscape glistens with frost. Yet a sneaking doubt creeps in that the philosophers possibly knew what they were talking about when they said you cannot make an appointment with happiness any more than you can with death.

It would seem that short story writers (not our short story writers, as the newspapers would say) have a habit of describing a ship's radio officer, known to the seafaring world as "Sparks," as a delicate-looking youth, or weedy, anaemic fellow.

"I can assure you that the average 'Sparks' is neither weedy nor pale-looking," writes a gentleman who signs himself "Sparks" from a British ship that called at Suez on its way to the Orient. "We're just a bunch of normal fellows like any other seafarers. Have you noticed that all mates and second-mates in fiction are disguised as tough guys who shave with blow-lamps? Well, don't you believe it.

"Recently while ashore in an African port I had to bump together the heads of our second mate and 'hard-case' third engineer to subdue their truculence and keep them out of local trouble. And I didn't suffer any for doing so.

"Also, please remember that the middle-weight champion of India happens to be a wireless operator."

Neither weedy nor pale-looking

BANG GOES another illusion! So it goes on; we are now led to believe that the really tough guys of the ships are to be found among the coils and condensers, while those heroes of our boyhood, those mighty men of oaths and belaying pins are only too willing to have their heads knocked together when they start showing Africa the tattooing on their arms.

Before we slink back into the kennel to hide the sorrow in our eyes, let us tell you of Mrs. W., a West Country bride, who having lured a poor lad to the altar is even now suffering the same pangs of disillusionment.

"No woman, however attractive she may be, can turn a work-mad man into a romantic human being," says she bitterly. "When I was married to him I agreed to forgo a honeymoon until the summer, not because we had no money, but because he could not leave his work.

"I hid my disappointment and looked forward to the summer. At last we went off for our belated honeymoon, but I was too optimistic for my husband took his typewriter and a sheaf of documents and worked from morn till night, giving little thought to me. We have now been home again for a month and it is work, work all the time. Here is a warning to young girls; choose a man who is diligent, and a little ambitious, but avoid like the plague the man who has no time for anything but work. He is not human and no woman can change him."

Despite our child-like innocence, and our unfailing belief in humanity we cannot express surprise at the cause of Mrs. W.'s embarrassment. Way back in the dim dawn of history we seem to have heard the echoes of women lamenting the fact that they have beaten and broken their men, but they have never accomplished the reform that looked so easy from outside of a wedding ring. Anyway, when a man's married there's nothing else for him to do except work.

Service on motoring, travel, holidays, dress, finance, education, and every other practical subject is given free by "The Passing Show" Advice Service, 31 Bow Street, London, W.C.2. Enclose stamped envelope.

Solution Next Week

CLUES DOWN

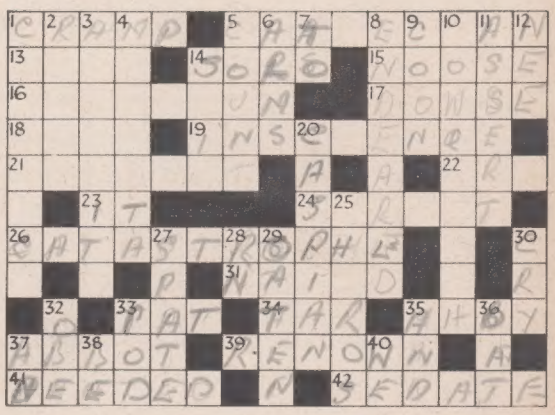
1. This is only a short one.
2. To trim one's feathers.
3. A roughness or harshness.
4. At atoms (anagram).
5. Something enclosed.
6. Call to these not desired by peaceful folk.
7. In such a manner.
8. Excited or increased affection.
9. A low fellow this.
10. Suggests religious building of little height.
11. To state definitely.
12. Half of 41.
14. Perhaps an amercement.
20. I can sap a Continental water.
25. This lighthouse sounds like plural of 14 across.
27. Tapes swell the river.
28. Service initials.
29. Cake may be so.
30. To do this we may be reluctant.
32. Abbreviated distinction.
33. A seed covering.
35. To be found in a mandate.
36. Only a fragment from a meal.
37. Two-thirds of 35 down.
38. The tail of 32.
40. You and I included.

S	T	O	P	P	E	R	■	S	T	R	E	T	C	H
E	A	S	E	■	V	I	C	E	R	E	G	A	L	■
P	R	I	N	T	E	D	■	T	O	P	■	B	O	G
A	N	E	M	O	N	E	S	■	P	A	I	L	S	■
R	R	A	N	T	■	O	V	E	R	S	E	E	R	■
A	S	■	N	E	S	T	O	R	■	T	■	T	O	■
T	A	P	S	■	■	O	N	■	E	A	S	E	D	■
E	M	■	H	O	A	R	■	I	C	E	D	■	■	■
D	I	M	I	N	U	E	N	D	O	■	A	B	E	T
■	T	A	P	E	R	■	I	L	L	E	G	A	L	■
L	E	D	■	S	A	P	P	E	D	■	E	N	D	S

Solution to last week's puzzle

CLUES ACROSS

1. Involuntary muscular contraction.
5. Keeper of the castle.
13. Rest into past.
14. A card game.
15. May be dangerous place for one's head.
16. Favouritism shown to nephews.
17. Endow sensibly (hidden).
18. Something prolific.
19. Cine scene (anagram).
21. Someone driven to wrath.
22. Distinguished personage (initials).
23. Neuter pronoun.
24. To come forth.
26. This may be a calamity.
31. Here is a water nymph.
33. A slight blow.
34. Jack's the boy here.
35. And this may be his cry.
37. Monastic head.
39. Such is fame.
41. Something required.
42. Very quiet and serio us.



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